

AN Enquiry into the
E N Q U I R Y

INTO THE

AUTHENTICITY OF THE POEMS

ATTRIBUTED TO THOMAS ROWLEY.

IN WHICH THE ARGUMENTS

OF THE DEAN OF EXETER, AND MR. BRYANT,

ARE EXAMINED.

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ENQUIRY

INTO THE

AUTHENTICITY OF THE COINS

ATTRIBUTED TO THOMAS BARNES

IN WHICH THE ARGUMENTS

OF THE CASE OF EXHIBIT AND REPLY



BY THE MUSEUM

PRINTED BY D. COLLIER, CO. FOR EXHIBIT, AND REPLY

LONDON

PRINTED FOR D. COLLIER, IN THE

AND BY THE

MUSEUM

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ENQUIRY, &c.

ABOUT ten years ago, the late lord Henry earl of Litchfield shewed me a collection of manuscript poems which he had just brought from Bristol. He said they were supposed to have been written by Thomas Rowley, a priest of the fifteenth century, and that they had lately been discovered in the parish-chest of Redcliffe church near that city. He did me the honour to ask my opinion of their authencity. On reading a few of them, I expressed my suspicions that they were most probably spurious. His lordship, whose excellent taste and penetration I will here acknowledge even in spite of my own hypothesis, replied, that he was surpris'd at my scepticism.

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I had

I had not afterwards any convenient opportunity of examining at leisure his lordship's manuscript, which I believe contained all the poems since published under the name of Rowley, elegantly transcribed. They are still preserved in the library at Ditchley, accompanied with a plausible and ingenious letter in defence of their originality, from my learned friend the late President of Saint John's college Oxford, who was not the first doctor in divinity destined to be a dupe to this egregious imposture.

The next year, my Brother, having been on a western tour, sent me some fragments of these poems, which he had accidentally procured from Mr. George Catcott, a respectable pewterer of Bristol. About the same time, Mr. Barrett, a skillful surgeon of that place, and an intelligent topographer, obligingly transmitted a small parchment containing the ACCOUNT OF WILLIAM CANYNGES FEAST, said to be one of the genuine manuscripts of the poetry found in Redcliffe church: and from doctor Harrington of Bath, I received a paper of anecdotes concerning the manner in which this extraordinary treasure was first brought to light. Soon afterwards, Mr. Catcott offered me the whole collection for seventy pounds. But I had
seen

seen and heard enough, and did not listen to a proposal, which on his own idea was not unreasonable.

It may be asked, why I did not immediately visit the fountain-head of this wonderful discovery? It may seem matter of surprise, that the venerable Gothic vaulting of the antient muniment-room in Redcliffe church, and the massy monumental chest which preserved these inestimable remains, had no charms to draw me to Bristol, in the united character of critic and antiquary! That I was inexorable to the many pressing invitations of Mr. George Catcott! That I took no pains, to examine original manuscripts of such antient English poetry as had not yet been seen, before they were unluckily mislaid, or irrecoverably lost! That I had no curiosity to inspect the vellum-rolls, both purple and yellow, the catalogue of Canynge's cabinet of medals, and the monastic antiquities of Bristol, all authenticated by specimens of the most obsolete spelling, and marked with the mellow vestiges of evanescent ink, in the possession of the communicative Mr. Barrett! An anonymous and angry critic, unexpectedly softens his tone, and allows, that I was once within sixteen

miles of Bristol². If not an indirect accusation, I congratulate myself on this very candid concession in my favour, from a writer so little inclined to give quarter. *Est quiddam prodire tenus*. But I will own much more, and what perhaps I ought in prudence to suppress. I have, in various years since the revival of Rowley, not only advanced within sixteen miles of Bristol, but at least four or five times have actually arrived at that city, and have been even sixteen miles beyond it. Yet I made no enquiries about Rowley or his poems. The truth is, the internal proofs had always appeared to me so convincing against the probability of the existence of that pretended antient poet, as to supersede the expediency of collecting facts, and of attending to any external arguments.

But if it had been absolutely necessary, I found it almost impossible, to obtain a complete copy of the poems: and therefore, on the scanty stock of materials which I have mentioned, consisting of only one supposed original, and of a few imperfect extracts, hastily taken, and incorrectly written, I ventured to open my criticism on the bard of Bristol, in the second volume of my History

² REMARKS UPON THE EIGHTH SECTION OF WARTON'S HISTORY OF ENGLISH POETRY. p. 6.

of English Poetry. A scrutiny on the spot would perhaps have prevented some inaccuracies and mutilations with which I have there exhibited a few of the passages. But by neglecting to take this important measure, I have unfortunately fallen into other mistakes and misrepresentations of no small consequence. Had I patiently reconnoitred the ground in person, I should have avoided the disgrace of many heavier imputations. * For I have been so careless as to assert, that the poems were found in an iron chest, which in reality is an wooden one. I have confounded Saint Ewin's church at Bristol with the cathedral. I have misnamed the yellow for the purple roll. I have given Rowley's poetry to Cannyng, and Cannyng's to Rowley. I have supposed a youth to be seventeen who was little more than fifteen. I have transferred a worthy benefactor's bequest of an annual dinner, from a deed of gift to a will. With other unpardonable and unwarrantable hallucinations, of equal weight in determining the merits of this enquiry; and which remind us of the unexpected retort of Curl the bookseller, who being stigmatised by Pope for having been ignominiously tossed in a blanket, seriously declared he was not tossed in a blanket but in a rug.

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In the year 1777, a complete edition of the poems attributed to Thomas Rowley, exhibiting entire and correct copies of those pieces which I had before only seen in detached parts, and comprehending others of which I had never before heard, was published under the care of an able critic. But this publication, a test to which now a full appeal might be made, instead of staggering, only served to strengthen, my early apprehensions of a forgery: and by multiplying evidences in support of my suspicions, furnished me with those additional arguments, which I was now forced to throw together in the appendix to my second volume abovementioned. Not long after, I had the satisfaction to see the same side of the question adopted and defended by the editor of the poems, in Observations on their language, which appeared to me so decisive, as to preclude all future attempts to prove these pieces an original production of the fifteenth century.

But of literary contention there is no end. The Bristol-chest has become the box of Pandora to the critical world. This controversy has been lately revived, in the most formidable shape, by Mr. Jacob Bryant, and the reverend the Dean of Exeter, who contend that Rowley's poems are genuine. As both
these

these writers have condescended to controvert some of my arguments, and as what I have hitherto advanced only forms an incidental part of a larger and a more general work, I have thought it my duty to resume this subject, to examine it with a greater degree of particularity, to extend and illustrate the principles I before had established, and to consider, if not to confute, the chief objections. To have been silent or even indifferent on this occasion, would have betrayed a want of respect to the character of my two very learned and powerful opponents, or of proof in vindication of my original opinion. I would not incur the censure either of petulance or pusillanimity.

But even under these circumstances, a dispute about an unknown priest, who could compose polished English verses in the fifteenth century, and a blue-coat boy of Bristol newly converted into an attorney's clerk, who could imitate the language of Chaucer and Lydgate, may perhaps appear too trifling to admit any further discussion. Insignificant as it may seem, the determination of these questions affects the great lines of the history of poetry, and even of general literature. If it should at last be decided, that these poems were really written so early as the reign of
king

king Edward the fourth, the entire system that has hitherto been framed concerning the progression of poetical composition, and every theory that has been established on the gradual improvements of taste, style, and language, will be shaken and disarranged.

My readers will observe, that in the course of this enquiry, I have not only supposed the poems to be spurious, but to have been forged by Thomas Chatterton, the youth by whom they were first discovered and circulated. They will also be pleased at the same time to remember, that my adversaries have drawn an unfair conclusion from the reverse of these two suppositions, that is, the antiquity of the poems, and the incompetence of Chatterton. From these two points, improperly blended and involved, Mr. Bryant and doctor Milles are perpetually starting a dilemma, that because the poems could not have been written by Chatterton, therefore they must necessarily be the composition of Rowley.

I shall distribute my arguments under the following heads. I. STYLE, COMPOSITION, AND SENTIMENT. II. METRE. III. ANCIENT LANGUAGE. IV. HISTORICAL ALLUSIONS. V. BATTLE OF HASTINGS, and ELLA a TRAGEDY. VI. COMPARISON

CHATTERTON'S POEMS WITH THE POEMS
ATTRIBUTED TO ROWLEY. VII. MIS-
CELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS. VIII. CHA-
RACTER AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF CHAT-
TERTON.

I. STYLE, COMPOSITION, AND SENTI-
MENT. I find it necessary to treat these
principles indistinctly, as they are almost per-
petually intermixed. And I shall consider
STYLE in its most extensive signification, not
only as including general structure, but
versification.

These poems exhibit, both in the connec-
tion of words and sentences, a facility of
combination, a quickness of transition, a ra-
pidity of apostrophe, a frequent variation of
form and phrase, and a firmness of contex-
ture, which must have been the result of a
long establishment of the arts and habits of
writing. The versification is equally vigorous
and harmonious, and is formed on a general
elegance and stability of expression. It is
remarkable, that whole stanzas sparkle
with that brilliancy, which did not appear
in our poetry till towards the middle of the
present century. The lines have all the tricks
and trappings, all the sophistications of poe-
tical style, belonging to those models which

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were

were popular when Chatterton began to write verses.

Our old English poets are minute and particular. They do not deal in abstraction and general exhibition, the effects of affectation and a restless pursuit of novelty. They dwell on realities. Even in the course of narration or description, where poets of the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries would have used the literal expression, and represented the subject by the mention of natural circumstances, the writer of these pieces adopts ideal terms and artificial modes of telling a fact, and too frequently falls into metaphor, metaphysical imagery, and incidental personification.

Thus in the **BATTLE** of **HASTINGS**, where the intoxication of Harold's army on the eve of the engagement is described, the poet says,

Thro everie troope Disorder reer'd her hedde ^b.

Again, in the **TRAGEDY** of **ELLA**, a messenger, or watchman reports,

— Dyforder thro oure hoafte

Is fleynge, boſne onne wynges of Ælla's name ^c.

In **GOODWYN**, of a melancholy scene,

And Sadneſſe ynne the owlette ſhake the dale ^d.

^b B. H. ii. 15.

^c Ver. 574.

^d G. T. 193.

In the EPISTLE to MASTRE CANYGNE,
the ignorance of the barbarous ages is thus
expressed:

When Reason hylt^a herselfe in cloudes of nyghte^c.

In the EXCELLENTE BALADE OF CHARITIE,
a storm is painted.

The windes are up : the lofty elmen fwanges.

This is natural and circumstantial. Again,
the rattling thunder

Shakes the hie spyre. ——— ———

But the thunder-clap, when its sound and
force are spent,

Still on the gallard^f care of Terroure hangs^g.

A builder of ruins is seldom exact
throughout, in his imitation of the old-
fashioned architecture. Some modern mould-
ing or ornament will here and there unfor-
tunately be detected, in the bend of an arch,
the tracery of a niche, or the ramifications
of a window. Some member of the Chinese
Gothic will unavoidably peep out, and betray
the fraud. — But to proceed.

In the FIRST ECLOGUE, Robert one of
the shepherds displays the miseries of the
civil war between York and Lancaster by

^a Hid.

^c Ver. 2.

^f Frighted.

^g Ver. 39.

complaining, that ENGLAND now wears a bloody dress, and stains her face with the gore of her own heroes: that PEACE is fled, and DISORDER shews her darksome complexion,

And thorow ayre doth flie yn garments steyned with bloude ^h.

And the subject is thus opened,

Whanne Englande smeethynge ⁱ from her lethal wounde
From her galled necke did twytte the chayne awaie ^k.

In this contest many brave Englishmen fell.
And why?

—— Twas Honour led the fraie ^l.

In the TRAGEDY of ELLA, Celmonde in imploring success for the *gentle* Ella, wishes that the moon, in its varied changes, may *shed* various blessings on his head,

Bespreyngyne far abroad Mischaunce's night ^m.

To which we may add,

Myselfe, and all that's myne, bounde ynne Mischaunce's chayne ⁿ.

Night, in the same play, is thus described in terms of which I understand enough to perceive their impropriety.

^h Ibid. 60.

ⁱ Smoaking.

^k Ibid. 1.

^l Ibid. 4.

^m Ver. 78.

ⁿ Ibid. 4.

Wyde ys the sylver leme of Comfort wove °.

And in another description of night, where an old poet in describing moonlight, might perhaps have said that the Fairies now began their revels, our author's imagination goes much farther. He uses the agency of a system of ideal creatures, as a vehicle for his general disposition to abstracted poetry.

The tryppeynge Faeries weve the golden dreme
Of Selineffe P, whyche flieth with the nyghte ².

Ella, thus figuratively, and with the introduction of Mastership impersonated, exhorts his heroes to battle. To say nothing of the lustre of the language and versification.

And everyche champyone potte the joyous crowne
Of certane Masterschyppe upon hys glestreynge browes ³.

Again, Ella having been successively compared to a tree, a star, a fire, a mountain, a rock, and a young wolf, marches to the field, under the protection of the same redoubted divinity.

With gore-depycted wynges Masterie arounde hym
fledde ⁴.

Every page affords these striking and characteristic features of false refinement.

° Ibid. 1010.

P Happines.

² Ecl. i. 31.

³ T. E. 590,

⁴ Ibid. 762.

Almost every stanza presents one of those fantastic agents, which compose the train of modern poetry.

But the appearance of these images is not only transient and incidental, as arising out of the course or tenour of a narrative or a speech. Our author's propensity to personification is sometimes indulged to a far greater extent. And here it is no less exceptionable. Not to advert at present to the decorations of expression, his HOPE, FREEDOM, and BATTAYLE, are delineated on too large a scale for the simplicity of a remote period. The terrible groupe of Miseries and Misfortunes which Sackville in the *MIRROUR OF MAGISTRATES* has stationed at the portal of hell, and the imbodied passions, virtues, and vices, of Spenser's *FAIRY QUEEN*, a poem professedly allegorical, have not that amplitude of proportion, distinctness of figure, selection of picturesque attributes, discrimination, activity, and life, which constitute the personal creations of Rowley. But Rowley preceded Sackville and Spenser by a century. I must give the portrait of FREEDOM, with her attendants. It makes a chorus in the tragedy of *GODDWYN*.

Whanne

Whanne FREEDOM dresse in blodde-steyned veste,
 To everie knight her warre-songe sunge,
 Uppon her hedde wylde wedes were spredde,
 A gorie anlace by her honge.
 Shee daunced onne the heathe,
 She hearde the voice of deathe :
 Pale-eyned AFFRYGHT, hys harte of sylver hue,
 In vayne assayled her bosomme to acale^t :
 She hearde onflemed^u the shriekyng voice of woe,
 And Sadnesse in the owlette shake the dale.
 She shooke the burled^w speare,
 On hie she jesse her sheelde,
 Her foemen all appere,
 And flizze^x along the feelde.
 POWER, wythe his heafod straught^y ynto the skyes,
 Hys speere a sonne-beame, and his sheelde a starre,
 Alyche^z twaie brondeynge gronfyres^a rolles hys eyes,
 Chafte^b with hys yronne feete, and foundes to war.
 She syttes upon a rocke,
 She bendes before hys speere,
 She ryfes from the shooke,
 Wieldyng her owne in ayre.
 Harde as the thonder doth she dryve ytte on,
 Wytte scillye wymped gies^c ytte to his crowne,
 Hys longe sharpe speere, hys spreddyng sheelde ys gon,
 He falles, and fallynge rolleth thoufandes down.
 WAR, goare faced WAR, by ENVIS hurld^d, ariste^e,
 Hys seerie heaulme^f noddynge to the ayre,
 Tenne bloddie arrowes in hys straynyng fyste^g. —

^t Cool. Freeze. ^u Undismayed. ^w Pointed.
^x Fly swiftly. ^y Head Stretched. ^z Like.
^a Flaming meteors. ^b Stamps. ^c With skill concealed,
 guides. ^d Armed. ^e Arose. ^f Helmet. ^g G. T. 184.

Sackville and Spenser must here yield the palm of allegoric poetry, and freely confess,

Nobis non licet esse TAM DISERTIS!

Yet on this very suspicious ode, unhappily one of the most shining passages in all the poems, doctor Milles thus expatiates. “ This
“ Ode, or Chorus, is undoubtedly one of the
“ most sublime compositions of Rowley’s
“ pen. — It scarcely contains a redundant
“ word, or fails in a deficient expression;
“ nor can its powerful imagery be conveyed
“ in more concise or emphatical language.
“ Freedom never appeared in a more original
“ dress, than in her summons to war, in
“ her wild attire, her undaunted spirit, her
“ enduring fortitude: and the effectual man-
“ ner in which she avenges herself of her
“ enemy. The idea of Power is conveyed in
“ the most lofty images, &c.^b” This hyperbole of panegyric perhaps proves too much. The learned president of the society of antiquaries could not have produced more precise or satisfactory proofs, that this celebrated ode was not written three hundred years ago. It is Chatterton’s misfortune to be convicted of forgery, not only by himself, but by his friends. His pretensions to anti-

^b Milles’s ROWLEY, p. 298.

antiquity are alike endangered by the excellence of his own poetry, and the praises of his commentators.

But let it be granted, that this is as perfect a model of allegoric delineation as any which has yet appeared in English poetry. The wonder is dissolved, by recurring to the superiority of Rowley's genius. But superiority of genius, in the infancy of composition, never yet produced a perfect model. A great genius, at such a period, in the boldness of native conception, will strike out sublimities and beauties never before seen. But these will be vague, extravagant, and undigested. The truth is, such a delineation as this before us, is not the work of genius but of art. It is the tardy product of the accumulated practice, experience, and invention, of previous writers, who have successively been toiling for the use of posterity, and have supplied materials for future amplification and refinement. Poetry, like other sciences, has its gradual accessions and advancements. The united labour of past ages contributes to its maturity. The discoveries of Newton in natural philosophy, are the bright superstructure of a foundation laid by a long series of celebrated predecessors. Mr. Bryant has observed, in vindication of

the possibility that such poetry might have been written in the fifteenth century, that in every age there will be one person more eminent than the rest. But this eminence will be circumscribed or determined by adventitious and external circumstances. It will bear down many obstacles, but it will be impeded by others. Invention is not confined to any age. But it will be differently exerted at different eras. It will not always have the same appearance. The Dean of Exeter informs us, that the objection to the excellence of Rowley's poetry "amounts only to this, "that the fifteenth century has not produced, and therefore could not produce, "so great a genius as Rowley¹." Let us allow that it did produce Rowley. But how comes it pass, that this great genius should have *precisely* copied the style of the eighteenth century? Rowley might have formed a style: but it would not have been the same as that now existing. Genius is, in its nature, absolute, independent, and universal. But we should remember, that genius is connected with composition. It will acquire a determinate character and species. It will be in-

¹ Milles's ROWLEY, p. 380.

fluenced

fluenced by the condition of society. It will assume accidental and arbitrary forms. It will be subject to new and peculiar modifications.

Let us look back on the manner of writing practiced by our old poets. A slight comparison will contribute to demonstrate Rowley's conformity with the modern.

Of old English poetry, one of the striking characteristics is a continued tenour of disparity, not so much in the style as in the sentiment. But the bad predominates. In this sort of reading, we are but rarely relieved from disgust, or roused from indifference. We are suddenly charmed with a beautiful thought in the midst of a heap of rubbish. Like Addison's traveller in the desert who finds an unexpected fountain, if in the barren extent of a thousand lines we discover a solitary simile,

We bless our stars, and think it luxury!

In the unpolished ages, the muse was too awkwardly or too weakly courted to grant many favours to her lovers. In Gower, Chaucer, and Lydgate, elegant descriptions, ornamental images, and melodious couplets, bear no proportion to pages of languor or mediocrity, to prolix prosaic details in rhyme, uninteresting and tedious. But the

poems before us are uniformly supported. They are throughout poetical and animated. They have, to speak in general terms, no imbecillities either of thought or diction.

But to have been dull would not have suited Chatterton's purpose, nor indeed was it consistent with his genius. His aim was to dazzle and surprise, by producing such high-wrought pieces of antient poetry as never before existed. But to secure our credulity, he should have pleased us less. He has shewn too much genius, and too little skill. *Fallit te incautum pietas tua.* Over-acting his part, and unable or unwilling to repress his abilities, he awakened our suspicions, and exposed his want of address in attempting to deceive. He sacrificed his veracity to an imprudent ambition. Instead of wondering at his contrivance, we find he had none. A mediocrity of poetical talents would have succeeded much better in this imposture. He was too good a poet to conduct and execute such a forgery. He conceived, that his old poetry would be sufficiently marked by old words and old spelling. But he took no caution about thoughts and imagery, the sentiment and the substance. He had forgot, or never knew, or was not inclined to believe, that the garb of anti-

antiquity would but ill become the elegance of Pope, or the spirit of Dryden. So just is the observation of doctor Milles, when comparing the ideas of Rowley and of Chaucer. "The nicest observer will scarcely discover a feature of resemblance between the two poets^k."

To pursue this comparison yet farther. Our antient English bards abound in unnatural conceptions, strange imaginations, capricious extravagancies, and even the most ridiculous inconsistencies. But Rowley's poems present us with no incongruous combinations, no mixture of manners, institutions, usages, and characters. They have no violent or gross improprieties. In our old poets, Ovid and saint Austin are sometimes cited in the same line. Our old poets are perpetually confounding Gothic and classical customs, knight-errantry and antient history, scripture and romance, religion and chivalry. They make no distinction between sacred or profane personages, between saints and heroes, the warriors of the Iliad and of the Round Table, conjurers and logicians. Helen and the holy virgin are often compared for beauty, for prowess Sir Tristram and Joshua,

^k Milles's ROWLEY, p. 168.

and

and for wisdom Merlin and Aristotle. When a series of illustrious lovers is enumerated, Sampson and Dalila, David and Bathsheba, and Solomon with all his concubines, are arranged in company with Dido and Eneas, Medea and Jason, and Hercules and Deianira. In Gower's *CONFESSIO AMANTIS*, Ulysses is supposed to have learned rhetoric of Cicero. In Lydgate's metrical *LYFE OF OUR LADY*, there are two long chapters, "Howe
 " Joseph went to seeke a mydwyfe, and
 " howe our Lady receyved the mydwyves¹." The same poet, a scholar and an ecclesiastic, and till our late discoveries, one of the first poetical luminaries of the fifteenth century, makes Priam found a chantry in the capital church of Troy for Hector's soul. Such was then the condition of writers and of readers, that Lydgate, in another poem has seriously versified the rubrics of the missal, which he applies to the god Cupid, declaring that he frequently meditated with great delight and edification on the holy legend of those constant martyrs, who were not afraid to suffer a lingering death for the faith of that omnipotent deity. Do we find any of these weaknesses, these palpable absurdities, in Rowley?

¹ CH. xxxvii. xli.

I have been shewing that these poems, in style, composition, and sentiment, are not genuine, from their dissimilitude to the antients, and their resemblance of the moderns. That resemblance has hitherto been distantly inferred from general cast and colouring. But the proof does not rest here. It may be drawn still closer.

These poems abound with modern words, and modern formularies of expression: with whole lines, and often prolix paragraphs, not to be possibly distinguished from the composition of the present day.

I begin with specimens of modern words, and have selected the following from many others. A slight comment will be sufficient. *Puerilitie*. B. H. i. 67. "Together
"both han byn *ybred*." *Bred* did not antiently signify *educated*, or *brought up*. Ibid. 68. Before his *optics*. Ibid. 407. "*Blameless*
"tongue." This epithet, peculiarly used, is from Pope's *Homer*. Ibid. 537. *Latinised*.
EPIST. CAN. 18. "Gethre upp the speres
"*besprente*." This word, now modernised by frequent use, and in this sense, antiently signified *besprinkled*, not *scattered*. Tourn. 154. "The authoure of the *piece* which
"we enacte." That is, of the *play*. PROL.
CAN. 7. *To feare the Lorde*. B. T. 247.

Servantes

Servantes of the Lorde. Ibid. 199. *Godlie pfaume.* Ibid. 273. In the three last instances we have the phraseology, suggested by the stanza, of Sternhold and Hopkins. "Vessell wreckt upon the *tragick* sande." B. H. ii. 519. "The *proto-slene* manne." Ibid. 38. "*Succes*s and cheerfulness depicted on each face." *Succes*s had not yet attained this absolute signification. Ibid. 30. "Somme-*tyme at tragedie* they laughe and synge." *Tragedy* was not now known for a play, much less the familiar expression *at tragedie*. EP. CAN. 29. "Wee ynn godenesse wyll be *greate*." *Great* was never thus used by any antient writer. T. E. 150.

I pass on to modern formularies and modern combinations. "*Thus* Leofwine." B. H. ii. 101. *Thus be.* Ibid. 111. "Nor *Norcie*, could thye myghte," Ibid. 341. "O Alfwolde, *saie*, how shall I synge of thee, "Or telle, &c." Ibid. 311. Such apostrophic introductions, for diversifying the tenour of the narrative, did not belong to the rhetorical school of the fifteenth century. We have sometimes *He said*, in the same poem at concluding a speech. "Syfters in sorrowe." E. iv. 15. "Wake the morne." Ibid. 22. "The *notte browne* [nut-brown] Elinoure." Ibid. 5. "Warre-song." G. 185. "Bigge with
"fate."

"fate." B. H. ii. 303. "Poygnant arrowes
 "typp'd with destinie." B. H. i. 13. "What
 "doughtie Homer shall his praises synge?"
 B. H. ii. 442. "Oh Goddes." T. E. 697. "Ye
 "Goddes! Howe is a lover's temper formed."
 Ibid. 915. "Now by the Goddes." Ibid.
 713. "Goddes, here the Saxonnnes." Ibid.
 725. Who does not perceive in some of these
 instances the cant exclamations of modern
 tragedy? "Tourne thee." Ibid. 88. "Awaie,
 "Awaie!" Ibid. 244. "Oh Turgotte,
 "wheresoever thie sprite, &c." B. H. ii.
 581. Of this mode of address, too artificial
 for Rowley's age, our author is remarkably
 fond. "Oh thou, whateer thie name, Or
 "Zabulus, &c." T. E. 426. "Oh thou
 "whereer thie bones, &c." S. E. 29. "Mie
 "womannes breste." T. E. 1004. "Ah
 "what avayl'd, &c." B. H. ii. 337. "Ah
 "what avayl'd the lyons, &c." B. H. ii. 70.
 To enumerate his compound epithets, such
 as the "owlet's *eve-speckt* wing," the *spire-*
"girt towne," and a thousand others, would
 be tedious and trifling. Had they been used
 at all by the antients, they would have been
 constructed with much less art, and more
 sparingly introduced. In the BATTLE OF
 HASTINGS, the terms of application and
 introduction to his comparisons, *As when,*

D
Such

Such was, and the like, are very suspicious. Particularly his affected repetitions of the things compared, with the constant introduction of the illustrative adverb *So*. As thus.

Browne as the fylberte droppying from the shelle,

Browne as the nappy ale at hocktyde game,

So browne the crokyd rynges that featlie felle

Over the neck of the all-beauteous dame.

Greie as the morne, before the ruddie flame

Of Phebus charyott rollynge thro the skie,

Greie as the steel-horn'd goats Conyan made tame,

So greie appeard her featly-sparklyng eye. —

Sweet as the voice of thraflarkes in the spring

So sweet the wordes that from her lippes did falle. —

Tapre as candles laid at Cuthbert's shryne,

Tapre as almes that Goodrickes abbie shrove,

Tapre as sylver chalices for wyne,

So tapre was her armes and shape ygrove^m.

Surely our author must have seen the following lines, which I transcribe from an *authentic* manuscript in my possession, rather older than the discovery of Rowley's poems.

Thus when a Barber and a Collier fight,

The Barber beats th' unhappy Collier white;

In comes the Dyer, of cerulean hue,

And beats the Barber and the Collier blue:

Next comes the Brickdustman with rouge bespred,

And beats the Barber, Collier, Dyer, — red:

^m B. H. ii. 411.—435.

The rallying Collier heaves his empty sack,
Knocks down the Brickduftman, and beats him black.

So blue, so red; the bridal morn arose;

When Belimperia wak'd from soft repose:

So red, so black and blue, so black and white,

Look'd Holofernes when he saw the sprite!

But, many entire lines, and often, prolix paragraphs, cannot be distinguished from the compositions of the present day. The limits of this pamphlet, in which I do not mean to reprint the greatest part of Rowley's poems, will admit only a few specimens. The reader will perceive, that the artificial sprinklings of obsolete spelling, and sometimes of old words, detect what they should disguise.

In the BATTLE of HASTINGS.

But lyv'd in love, and Rosaline's embrace *.

In the same,

Bothe scorn'd to yeelde, and both abhor'd to flie,

Resolv'd to vanquish, or resolv'd to die *.

Doctor Milles observes, that "these two lines
" have an appearance of modern phraseology;
" but such ideas are common to writers of
" every age." But not such a construction,
nor such an arrangement of expression.

* B. H. ii. 208.

Ibid 349.

Pag. 80.

In the same,

And stopt his driving steedes, and hid his lyghtsom ray¹:

This sort of augmentative, arising from a repetition of the conjunction, *And*, after the pause in the middle of an Alexandrine, is, I believe, first used by Dryden. It might have been mentioned as an instance under the head of modern formularies.

In the same,

Felte a dire arrowe burnynge in his breste;

Before he dyd, he sente hys speare awaie,

Thenne funke to glorie and eternal rest².

In the same,

Such majestie was in her porte displaid,

To be excell'd by none but Homer's martial maid³.

In the same,

— — — The sun, her mind,

Did guilde her mortal shape, and all her charms refin'd⁴.

In the same,

He clos'd his cyme in everlastynge nighte:

Ah! what avayl'd the Lyons on his cresse⁵.

In the TRAGEDY of ELLA,

— — — Thie beauteous hue,

Whyche strooke mye mynde, and rouz'd my softer soule⁶.

¹ B. H. ii. 220.

² Ibid. 252.

³ Ibid. 460.

⁴ Ibid. 440.

⁵ Ibid. 278.

⁶ Ver. 26.

In the same,

Hear from my groted ^x harte the lover and the friend ^y.

In the same,

Brynge mee a stede with egle winges for flyghte,
Swyfte as mie wyshe, and, as mie love ys, strong ^z.

In the same,

That, I on Birtha's breste, may thynke of warre no
more ^a.

In the same,

Mie race of love, mie race of lyfe, ys ronne ^b.

Of a spire, in the poem ONN OUR LADIES
CHYRCHE,

That shootes alofte into the reaulmes of daie ^c.

In the BRISTOWE TRAGEDY.

Be thyne the olyve rodde ^d.

In the opening of the second part of the
BATTLE OF HASTINGS.

Oh TRUTH! immortal daughter of the skies, —
Teach me, fayre Saincte! thy passynge worth to pryze,
To blame a friend, and give a foeman prayse ^e.

Where, by the way, a priest of the fifteenth
century would never have called TRUTH a
Saint: but would have done, what doctor
Milles thinks happily avoided for this truly

^x Offended.

^y Ibid. 337.

^z Ibid. 911.

^a Ibid. 1144.

^b Ibid. 1172.

^c Ver. 7.

^d Ver. 72.

^e B. H. ii. 1,

Pindaric address, would have "opened with
 "a melancholy ejaculation in the ballad-
 "style".

In the poem on HAPPINESS, Content is
 thus elegantly hailed,

All hayle CONTENTE, thou mayde of turtle-eyne *!

I will close this tedious series of quotation
 with one whole stanza, from the BATTLE of
 HASTINGS, describing an earthquake.

As when the erthe, torn by convulsions dyre,
 In reaulmes of darkness hid from human syghte,
 The warring force of water, air, and fyre,
 Braft^h from the regions of eternal nyghte,
 Thro the darke caverns seeke the reaulmes of lyght:
 Some loftie mountaine, by its fury torne,
 Dredfully moves, and causes grete affryght,
 Now here now there majestie nods the bourneⁱ,
 And awfulle shakes, mov'd by th' almyghty force,
 Whole woods and forests nod, and ryvers change theyr
 course^k.

^f Pag. 97. ^g Ver. 8. ^h Burst, i. e. burking.

ⁱ Projection of a rock or promontory, from Shakespeare's
 "dread summit of this chalk bourn," in KING LEAR, iv. 5.

^k B. H. i. 191. Had I not been preoccupied by others,
 I would here have added Chatterton's numerous literal imita-
 tions of modern English poets. I will, however, point out
 one, which I think has not been yet mentioned. ONN OUR
 LADIES CHYRCHE, P. i. 5.

— Some counynge fairie hande
 Yreer'd this chapel in this lande.

Evidently

Before I close this head, I must observe, that in extenuation of the objection arising from the smoothness and elegance of Rowley, it is pretended that his native asperities have sometimes been softened and modernised, and perhaps the defects of his manuscripts interpolated, by the officious hand of Chatterton. If this be true, where is the value or curiosity of this boasted discovery of antient English poetry? If a modern corrector has been at work, he has apparently been so very busy, as to leave but little or none of the original.

Evidently from Gray's LONG STORY, that mixture of true poetry and false humour. ver. 4.

Employ'd the power of fairy hands

To rear the cieling's fretted heighth.

Most of these imitations are passed over by the Commentator. But he observes in general, "If Chatterton could be supposed to have borrowed such *distant* and *immaterial* allusions from our modern English poets, would he not have endeavoured to grace his compositions by copying their *ideas and language* in the more imperfect and beautiful *images of their poetry*?" That Chatterton has copied their *ideas and language*, I think we have abundantly proved. He adds, "And how absurd must be the *idea* of that plagiarist, who exposes himself to shame and detection, without the prospect of reaping any poetic credit, &c." But, in the careless haste and heat of composition, these imitations were the involuntary and almost imperceptible escapes of a mind seasoned with modern English poetry. Milles's ROWLEY, p. 245.

His

His file has worn what it polished. The story of old Cutler's only pair of stockings, I am afraid, will be here inverted: they were originally of filk, but by being often mended with worsted, at last became entirely a pair of worsted stockings. In the present case, we will suppose, we have a pair of good plain stockings, originally worsted, which by being carefully darned with filk, are absolutely converted into a very decent pair of filk stockings. If a portrait by Hans Holbein was to be retouched, or rather repainted, by Reynolds, it would undoubtedly be made a much finer picture. But it would not be a picture by Hans Holbein. If, however, the poetry before us should have been only corrected or interpolated by parts, I believe there will be no difficulty in drawing the line of distinction between the respective property of Rowley and Chatterton. For such corrections and interpolations will appear to consist not only in words or hemistichs, but in a suite of stanzas, in passages of considerable length, and such as have been the favourites of the public, and have been distinguished for their poetical beauties. In a word, the few flat and insipid passages that remain in their original state, and are the indisputable relics of the Redcliffe-chest, will

will easily be configned to Rowley. Thus have we been blindly lavishing our admiration, and wasting voluminous illustrations and laboured commentaries, on an antient bard of the eighteenth and not of the fifteenth century.

II. METRE. It is not my design to enter into a minute and technical examination of the measures of these poems. A few general observations will be sufficient.

The stanza of old English poetry is most commonly formed of lines of equal feet, and constantly preserves an uniform recurrence of the same systematic alternation of rhyme. The SONGE TO ELLA is composed in that devious and irregular measure, which has been called the Pindaric. What shall we think of a Pindaric ode in the reign of Edward the fourth? It is well known, that this novelty was reserved for the capricious ambition of Cowley's muse. The writers of the fifteenth century were not so fond of soaring. They had neither skill nor strength for such towering flights. Our learned commentator, however, always abounding in a fertility of resource, immediately removes this difficulty, by considering the fire of Rowley's genius, impetuous in its career, impatient of me-

E

chanical

chanical restraint, and indulging its enthusiastic excursions in the freedom of unconfined numbers, and an unfettered prosody. He even proceeds so far, in solving this problem, as to insinuate that Rowley might have seen Pindar. "That he had never seen or heard of the works of Pindar, his objectors cannot take upon them to prove^k." Pindar was one of the Greek classics that emerged late, at the restoration of literature. He might have been known, although this does not appear, to the few English scholars who now travelled into Italy: but certainly not to a provincial priest, educated in an obscure convent at Keinsham in Somersetshire, and confined to his pastoral duties within the narrow circle of Bristol. If the name of Pindar was at this time known in England, I suspect it was scarcely known whether he was a Greek poet or a Greek philosopher, whether he wrote Greek odes or Greek homilies. Is he mentioned or cited by any of Rowley's contemporaries? So is Pythagoras and Hermes Trismegistus by Chaucer. The first Latin version of Pindar was by John Lonicus, printed at Basil in 1528. Melancthon's translation could not, I think, have

^k Milles's ROWLEY, p. 381.

been so early. But Rowley was above Latin versions of Greek, the refuge of a modern schoolboy. He was a reader of the Greek classics in their original, where he saw their genuine excellencies. He was not only acquainted with Pindar, but, as we are peremptorily assured by the Dean of Exeter, with Homer, with Theocritus and Moschus¹. If Rowley was acquainted with Pindar, he has borrowed nothing from the Theban bard, but the licentious exuberance of his lyrics.

The stanza of the BATTLE of HASTINGS, of the TOURNAMENT, and of the Tragedies of ELLA and GOODDWYN, consists of ten lines. It is constructed of two quatrains rhyming alternately, and these are closed with an Alexandrine. The long stanza, or OTTAVA RIMA, of Chaucer, never exceeds eight lines. Lydgate's is commonly confined to seven, and is the same that is called by Gascoigne, a critic and poet of the decline of the sixteenth century, RITHME ROYAL. But neither Chaucer nor Lydgate close with the Alexandrine. Spenser, with the addition of the Alexandrine, and some difference in the alternation of the rhymes, is the first that extended this stanza to nine lines. At

¹ Milles's ROWLEY, p. 204.

length Prior, who lived more than two centuries after Rowley, in his Ode on the Queen, augmented Spenser's stanza with a tenth line, preserving his Alexandrine. This last, of which examples have been multiplied, was our poet's model. But not only these improvements, if such they are, of the old OTTAVA RIMA, originally used by Boccace, exclude the claim of antiquity from Rowley, but the unvaried and habitual exactness of the modulation of his final Alexandrine. Out of three or four hundred Alexandrines, hardly ten will be found that have not the pause after the third foot, so indispensably essential to the legitimate march and just effect of an Alexandrine verse, and which is among the striking melodies of Dryden. As thus, in the BATTLE OF HASTINGS.

And brasse his sylver helme,—so furious was the blowe^m.

Spenser has numerous Alexandrines without this pause. As thus,

Which from a sacred fountaine welled forth alwayeⁿ.

Chatterton's third foot is moreover often a pure iambic, which much heightens the harmony. Had the supposed Rowley written Alexandrines, I suspect he would not have

^m B. H. ii. 300.

ⁿ FAIR, QU. i. 1. 34.

exceeded Spenser, and equalled Dryden, in the music of versification.

I am persuaded, a greater variety of metre will not be found in any modern and more voluminous miscellany. From the sublime irregularity of the Pindaric, and the stately solemnity of the RITHME ROYAL, our author sometimes descends to sport in lighter strains. The desultory genius of Rowley disdained the dull identity, not only of a beaten but of a common track.

In the TRAGEDY OF ELLA, we have an ode, of which this is one of the stanzas.

Mie husbände, lorde Thomas, a forrester boulde,
As ever clove pynne, or the baskette,
Does no cherysauncys from Elynoure houlde,
I have ytte as soon as I aske ytte.

In Dursley's *Pills to purge Melancholy*, or some other book of *Pills* for the same salutary purpose, I remember an old Somersetshire ballad, yet certainly not older than the latter end of the last century, which exhibits, I believe for the first time, the same structure of stanza.

Go find out the vicar of Taunton Dean,
And he'll tell you the Banns they were asked,
A thumping fat Capon he had for his pains,
And I skewer'd her up in a basket.

In

The old Chaucerian word *Cherisauncey*, in Chatterton's stanza, never danced so gaily before. But it is not so much to the movement, as to the double rhymes, that I here object.

There are I confess some double rhymes in Chaucer's ROMANT OF THE ROSE, but they are accidental, and they were suggested by correspondent French words and couplets in the French original. In our present instance, the double rhyme is constitutive of a peculiar conformation of stanza, of which it is one of the essential properties. An ode was to be written with a regular and imposed return of this duplication. To say nothing in the mean time, that Chatterton took, perhaps imperceptibly, the two words here employed for double rhymes, from the ballad I have cited. The double rhyme is now adapted to the comic and familiar style: and the unexpected consonancy often gives an air of burlesque. Not one example occurs in Chaucer's burlesque poem of SIR THOPAS. Nor was it scarcely ever used under any circumstances by the elder poets, except in translation.

Another metrical objection to be made to the authenticity of these poems, is the truth of accent, or legitimacy of cadence, which uniformly marks the termination of the lines. Our author never offends the ear by the use
of

of words at the end of his verses, which would produce an improper stress on final syllables. This is a common and characteristic fault of the versification of the old poets. But the writer of these pieces had been evidently trained to another texture and tone of verse. The sudden and abundant importation of Latin and exotic words into our language, by Chaucer and his immediate successors or followers, filled our style with polysyllabic terms. These sometimes of course found a place at the end of a line. There was however some degree of affectation in the case, occasioned by our imitation of the Italian poets : and the polysyllabic close continued even below Fairfax. Lydgate, Rowley's cotemporary, is full of this unharmonious chime. Instances without number might be brought from his *SIEGE OF THEBES*, written in couplets ; but I quote one of his stanzas, which accidentally meets my eye in opening his *LYFE OF OUR LADY*.

Nowe, as mesemeth in this hie ferie^o,
 That named is the Purification,
 Euery man oughte to be glad and mery,
 And with gode harte, and hole entencion,
 Deuoutely brynge his oblacion,
 And offre fyrst the turtell of innocence,
 Of very mekenes, and hartely pacience P.

^o Festival. P Ch. lxxxix. Sig. Gg iiii. edit. Redman, 1530. 4to.

To quote one of our author's stanzas, in exemplification of this position, is to quote all. The following is transcribed at random from the BATTLE OF HASTINGS.

Next Sire du Moulin fell upon the ground,
Quite through his throte the lethal javlyn presse,
His soule and bloude came roushyng from the wounde:
He clos'd his eyen, and op'd them with the blesse.
It can no be I should behight the rest,
That by the myghtie arme of Alfwolde felle,
Past by a penne to be count or expresse,
How many Alfwolde sent to heaven or helle;
As leaves from trees shook by derne Autumns hand,
So laie the Normannes slain by Alfwold on the strand.

Let us here be blind, if we can, to dissimilarities resulting from other particulars, and fix our attention only on the fall of the verses, in both poets. How totally distant are the two stanzas, in this single circumstance alone of rythmical harmony!

Yet Mr. Bryant observes on this point, "Is there any thing extraordinary in a person of a good ear and taste, deviating from this manner of composition, and following better examples?" But goodness of taste and of ear are, both, relative terms. Our learned mythologist then proceeds, to shelter

Rowley's legitimate terminations under the example of Robert of Gloucester, a much more antient bard, who closes his verses with a due stability of pronounciation, and is free from this unnatural and unpleasing emphasis.

" Robert of Gloucester was no poet, but a
 " mere versifyer : yet he had taste enough to
 " be sometimes cautious about the polysylla-
 " bic closure. It is to be found oftener in
 " ten lines of Lydgate, Gower, and even of
 " Spenser, than in an hundred of this writer.
 " Hence we may perceive, that this mode of
 " proceeding in Rowley was not new."

But, with submission to Mr. Bryant's great judgment, I apprehend it was not that Robert of Gloucester had *taste* enough to avoid this defect. It was not from design or choice. He wrote his Chronicle at a time, when our language consisted almost entirely of monosyllables, and before its purity, or simplicity, was marred by the influx of a foreign phraseology. His words are all Teutonic or radical : and frequently for twenty lines together he does not afford five dissyllables. Surely the quick-sighted Rowley, who anticipated the beauties of future ages, and of poets yet unborn, would not have gone two

* OBSERVATIONS upon Rowley's Poems, p. 446, 447.

centuries backward for a model. He would rather have acquiesced in this laxity of the polysyllabic termination, which was undoubtedly now deemed a fashionable ornament, and an elegant departure from the plain monotonies of the primitive rhymers.

- III. ANTIENT LANGUAGE. The antient language of these poems is affected and unnatural. Antiquated expressions are engrafted on present modes of speech. "Old Edward's armour beams on Cibber's breast." Sometimes a modern style predominates, to the exclusion of the antient: and the tinsel of a polished phraseology is but thinly tinged with the rust of antiquity. The diction and versification are at perpetual variance. Our author is smooth and mellifluous as Pope and Mason, and yet more obscure and inexplicable than Gower or Chaucer. He has given a hardness and a stiffness even to obsolete language. He says, in speaking of the antient builders at Bristol,

And eche dygne buider dequac'd onn mie mynde*.

That is, "Each illustrious buider dashed upon my mind." The conclusion must be,

* St. C. 38.

that he borrowed his language from glossaries and etymological English lexicons, and not from life or practice. But he borrowed without selection or discernment. He seems to have been persuaded, that no other ingredient was necessary for his fiction than old words : and careless or ignorant of the application, which required the nicest conduct and caution, he presumed he had accomplished his design, by introducing as many antient terms, and of any antiquity, as he could collect. He viewed antient language as all of one age and one district. In dictionaries of old English, he saw words detached and separated from their context : these he seized and combined with others, without considering their relative or other accidental signification. Here too, he found the peculiarities of northern and southern dialects, thrown together for general explanation : these he carelessly blended, not observing their respective local appropriations. This confusion has been increased by misspellings, proceeding either from choice, ignorance, or accident, and by inflections at once ungrammatical and arbitrary. Thus has he fabricated a factitious antient diction, at once obsolete and heterogeneous, anomalous in every respect, such as never could have been in use at any era of

antiquity, is not transmitted by any antient English author, and most certainly would have been almost as little understood three centuries ago, as at present. Thus has he produced such a system of language, such a discordant tissue of words of distant provinces and distant periods, as never before coexisted. Again, this motley mixture of the modes of antient language being worked into a modern ground, has compounded such a *pasticcio* of style, as is still more unexampled and extravagant.

Mr. Bryant has this fundamental position. "One of the first positions which I must lay down, is, that these poems were written in a *provincial* dialect: according to the idiom of the people in whose country the author resided, and was probably born." How did it happen, that Rowley, who is afterwards said by Mr. Bryant to have been of Somersetshire, should at once shake off his provincial habits of speech, his native peculiarities of pronuntiation, his barbarous dialect, and uncouth phrases, and write so clear so intelligible a poem as SIR CHARLES BAWDIN?

Yet of this poem the Dean observes, that

† OBSERVATIONS, p. 1.

* Ibid, p. 10.

the

the modern complexion of the language and metre, “ may be accounted for from the nature of the subject, the clearness of the author’s imagination, and from the harmony of his ear. Every judicious poet will adapt his language to the style of poetry in which he writes ; and it may be observed, that Rowley has closely followed the advice of Horace, in the magnificent words, and *compound epithets*, which appear so frequently in his epic and dramatic pieces. And, on the other hand, with what ease and smoothness does his language flow in the Songs and Eclogues ! How plain and familiar is the style of this poem ! How suitable to that of all the antient Ballads which relate such dolefull events !”

To say nothing, that style and language are here confounded, and that no other poet of Rowley’s age has ever followed Horace’s advice concerning compound epithets, I will allow, that every judicious writer will adapt his language to his species of poetry. But if Mr. Bryant’s supposition be true, Rowley, whatever his judgement or even his genius might have been, had no choice of language. He possessed not the means nor the powers

▼ Milles’s ROWLEY, p. 324.

of

of this adaptation. Neither nature of subject, clearness of imagination, nor harmony of ear, could have operated on a writer under the dominion of the Somersetshire dialect, and living in the fifteenth century. His dramas, epics, odes, and pastorals, must have been all equally and uniformly provincial. Had Robert of Gloucester ever chose to deviate into any of these varieties of composition, I presume his language would have been just as rough as it appears at present in his metrical history. As to the familiarity which doctor Milles assigns to the ballad-style, and in which SIR CHARLES BAWDIN is supposed to be written, that circumstance must have added greatly to the provinciality, and consequently to the unintelligibility, of the poem. I omit other poems, nor do I repeat circumstances already mentioned, which alike tend to demonstrate, that the idea of founding the difficulties or the singularities of Rowley's language on the anomalies of any provincial dialect, is improbable and indefensible.

Mr. Bryant supposes, that Chatterton has shewn a want of knowledge in writing or explaining the old words of these poems, and therefore concludes, he was not the composer but only the transcriber. I will examine
this

this part of his argument in a few instances. Nor is it my intention to institute a formal and scientific disquisition on Rowley's language, which I leave to the learning, the precision, and dexterity, of Mr. Tyrwhit. I only mean to give a general specimen of the futile principles on which this very plausible plea has been conducted, and to shew how easily it may be confuted.

Mie Parker's Grange far spreadynge to the syghte, is interpreted by Chatterton, "Liberty of pasture given to the parker*." This, Mr. Bryant says, is not a grange. It is moreover objected, that a farmer, by whom the words are spoken, could not have a *park*, nor keep a *parker*. Mr. Bryant therefore determines, with sufficient latitude of conjecture, that Chatterton in the manuscript mistook *parker* for *parklich*, or *parklike*. Of *Grange*, a word, by the way, not quite obsolete, and occurring in Shakespeare, Chatterton gave a vague unprecise explanation from his own head, or from imperfect remembrance. As to *parker*, it is easy by the force of ingenious guesses to make sense out of nonsense. But I know not that the substitution of *parklich* will much mend the sense. Mr. Bryant's

* OBSERVATIONS, p. 35.

explanation is, "A grange, or granary, of
 "great extent, fenced about like a park."
 How was this enclosed granary, *far spread-
 ynge to the syghte*? Here is certainly a strong
 proof of Chatterton's ignorance, but not of
 ignorance in transcribing. He threw together,
 and then explained, antient words at random.
 The whole, to adopt the decision of the
 learned objector, "is a *boyish* mistake." Chat-
 terton had no other originals before him but
 his own genuine compositions: which having
 duely seasoned with a quantity of obsolete
 terms hastily or unskilfully collected, he
 afterwards interpreted, as he could, in as
 careless a glossary.

In the SECOND ECLOGUE we have these
 lines,

The gule-depeynsted oares from the black tyde,
 Decorn with fonnes^y rare, doe themrynge rise^z.

Here Mr. Bryant infers from the silence of
 the *transcriber* Chatterton, that he absurdly
 supposed "Oars to be that instrument by

^y Ver. 13.

^z *Fancied* ornaments, according to doctor Milles. Who
 hence takes occasion to say, that "Doctor Johnson had no
 "reason to call FUN a *low cant word*, it being of great *anti-
 "quity*, and *established* signification." Milles's ROWLEY, p.
 494.

which

“ which boats are rowed.” He adds, “ Now
 “ oars may indeed be painted, but I should
 “ think never with any rare designs.” I am
 partly of the same opinion. But who can
 account for the licentiousness of fancy? Our
 learned mythologist then endeavours to prove,
 from Nonius Marcellus, Plautus, and Aulus
 Gellius, that *Oar* here signifies *Wherry*.
 “ The name *wherry* is very ancient; and by
 “ the Romans was expressed *Horia*.” I be-
 lieve the silence of Chatterton may be easily
 accounted for. *Oar* in the present accepta-
 tion, seems to me to give the most natural,
 consistent, and most poetical sense of the
 context. Chatterton is here made a tran-
 scriber, because he does not explain a com-
 mon word. I will allow that he knew no-
 thing of this remote and primitive significa-
 tion of *Oar*.

It is insinuated, that Chatterton mistook
 his author Rowley, because he interprets
 PARAMENTS by *princely robes*, and, in ano-
 ther place, *robes of scarlet*. The annotator
 proves, that PARAMENT is a *throne of in-
 vestiture*, from Du Cange, and Hincmarus
 Rhemensis^b. The word occurs twice in
 Chaucer, and nearly in Chatterton’s sense.

^a OBSERVATIONS, p. 44. seq.

^b Bryant’s OBSERVATIONS, p. 293.

In the **LEGENDE** of **DIDO**, Eneas is conducted,

To daunsing chambers, full of **PARAMENTS**
Of riche beddis and of ornaments^c,

Again, in the **SQUIERS TALE**, where king Cambuscan goes from his throne in the Hall to a chamber richly decorated, or state-room,

Rose from his borde there as he fate full hie ;
Beforne him goith the loude minstralie,
Till thei came to his chambre of paramentes^d.

But Chatterton, if not from Skinner, took the word immediately from Speght's glossary to Chaucer, where it is interpreted thus, "**PARAMENTS**. Robes of state." Our supposed transcriber of antient originals, often poached in Speght's glossary, for old words, to stiffen his modern poetry. This was certainly one of the *originals* from which he *transcribed*. We are informed, that Chatterton's glossary of Speght's Chaucer, interlined with Chatterton's own hand, is in the possession of a gentleman of Cambridge. As none of the interlineations have transpired, we may suspect on which side of the question they would throw most light. Mr. Bryant adds, "The word occurs in two different

^c Edit. URR. p. 346. v. 181.

^d Edit. URR. p. 61. v. 289.

“ acceptations, of which the *transcriber* was “ not aware.” Both senses are from Speght: Chatterton explains one in Speght’s own words, as we have seen. This word is omitted in Mr. Tyrwhit’s excellent glossary *.

Chatterton is called a transcriber, for misinterpreting BREME, *strong* †. A fleet of ships is called *breme* ‡. But this is a kindred sense to Speght’s interpretation, *fierce*. Is the conclusion here just, that Chatterton explained what he did not understand? That he was the copier and not the poet? If an old word would bear a similar or secondary meaning, he adopted it, and explained it accordingly. Nor was he, otherwise, studious of exact interpretation §.

In the TOURNAMENT the poet says, that William the Conqueror’s passage through a dark forest was opposed by toads and adders.

The *lordynge* toade ynn all hys passes bides, &c †.

* See Cotgrave, in V.

† Bryant’s OBSERVATIONS, p. 115.

‡ ECL. ii. 6.

§ I will here give an instance of the use of *Breme*, never yet adduced. Leland speaking of a Castle in Fulbroke-park near Warwick, says, “ This castell stooode *bremlye* in the sight “ of Warwyke castle, and was a cawse of hart-brineynge.” That is, *conspicuously*, *full in syght*. “ It stared Warwick- “ castle in the face.” ITIN. vol. viii, 11, fol, 74. b.

† T. 56.

Lordyng is explained by Chatterton, *the toad standing on its hind legs*. This was one of the horrid impediments of the usurper's progress. And the exaggeration is very poetical. But Mr. Bryant infers, that here is another gross mistake of the transcriber. "Who, says he, ever saw a toad in this "strange attitude.^k?" Perhaps nobody but a poet. This wonderful and unnatural appearance is imagined, to heighten the terrors of the scene. The annotator then adds the *true* interpretation, as if from Rowley himself. "By *lordyng* is signified, *dull* and *heavy*." And he insinuates that Rowley might write *lourdan*. If Chatterton is here only the transcriber and interpreter of Rowley, he has certainly introduced a beauty not intended in his original. The context shews that our youth is right; and that he here, as in other places, perfectly understood his own meaning and his own poetry. All these loathsome animals are represented as roused, and in action, to stop the king. The owl flaps her wing: the adders leap forward and dart their stings: and the toad, in a posture not consistent with his usual sluggishness, appears in every path. In some picture of the

^k OBSERVATIONS, p. 283.

temptation of Saint Antony, I think I have seen a toad in this shape. But it is not from the painters that we are to convict Chatterton of plagiarism. He studied the modern poets.

A wild devious course of a river is called *bismare*. Chatterton's interpretation is, *bewildered, curious*. "These epithets, says "Mr. Bryant, he couples together, as if "they were synonymous: but they neither "of them convey the true meaning¹." At least, they convey Chatterton's meaning. Had Chatterton, continues the critic, "been "the author of these compositions, he would "have introduced the word in the same ac- "ception in which it is to be found in "Chaucer^m." But Chatterton did not read our old poets for a hard word: he consulted their glossarists, a more commodious sort of writers. In his old friend Speght he saw, "BISMARE. fantastickall strangeness." Chaucer's context, which he did not think it necessary to examine, and in which he could not have easily found the word, would have shewn him that Speght and his author did not always agree.

Courage is said to be "*knopped* in the frost

¹ OBSERVATIONS, p. 65.

^m Ibid. p. 67.

" of

“ of feare ⁿ.” That is, says Chatterton, *chained, fastened, congealed*. Mr. Bryant observes, that the “ transcriber has neither “ expressed, nor explained, *knopped*, truly ^o.” As to impropriety of expression, this is proposed to be removed by reading *nipped*. But a better is not always a right reading. As to explanation, here is another and a glaring proof that he consulted glossaries and not authors. Had he seen the word in Chaucer’s text, he would have there found that *Knopped* signified “ fastened, or tied “ with a button ^p.” This would have been too familiar an idea. But he looked no further than Speght, who gives only the general unappropriated sense. This Chatterton extended to a metaphor. When he wanted an old word, he did not always chuse the best.

When the christian fleet approaches the holy land, it is said

The amenused nationnes be astoun ^q.

Here again he has recourse to Speght, and interprets AMENUSED, *diminished*. Mr. Bryant affirms, that the word is not truly expressed or copied, but ought to be *amanfed*,

ⁿ E. M. 15.

^o OBSERVATIONS, p. 58.

^p ROM. ROSE. v. 7212.

^q ECL. ii. 5.

that

that is *accursed**. A commentator sometimes writes better than his poet. In another place the word is used and explained in the very same acceptation*. Undoubtedly, in the present instance, the Saracens might be more properly called *acursed*, than *diminished*. But AMENUSED was too stately a participle or epithet to be passed over. It fitted a place in his verse, and he had little farther anxiety about it. He trusted it to chance. His readers might, or might not, attend to precise propriety of signification. On the same thoughtless principle, and inattentive to future examination or detection, he manifestly forged many old words, which pass as antient current coin in doctor Milles's Glossary to Rowley, entitled, A GLOSSARY OF UNCOMMON WORDS.

But the most specious and boasted instance of misconception and false transcription lies in the following line.

Couldst thou not kenn, most skyll'd, After la goure†.

Here says Mr. Bryant, "the word *astrologer* used sometimes to be expressed *After-lagour*: and so it seems to have occurred here. He was so ignorant as to read it

* OBSERVATIONS, p. 111.

† L. M. C. 28.

‡ B. H. ii. 143.

" *After*

" *After la gour* : and he has absolutely dis-
 " joined the constituent parts, and taken it
 " for a proper name, the name of a Norman
 " of some consequence. He accordingly
 " forgets the real person spoken of, and
 " addresses this After La Gour as a person of
 " science.

Couldst thou not *kenne*, most *skyll'd* After la gour ?

" He thought it was analogous to Delacour,
 " Delamere, &c." But I do not remember,
 that *Afterlagour* was ever used for *Astrologer*.
 The word occurs once, and but once, in
 Chaucer, where it signifies the old astronomical
 instrument called an *Astrolabe*.

His ASTERLAGOUR longing for [to] his art,
 His augrim stonis, &c."

The learned Rowley must have known
 better, than to have called an Astrologer by
 the name of one of his instruments. The
 truth of the matter is this. Chatterton, in
 Speght's Glossary, found " ASTERLAGOUR.
 " an Astrolabe." He wanted a hard word
 for Astrologer, for which he used *Afterlagour*,
 I will not say whether by design or inadver-
 tency. Afterwards, perhaps in writing over
 the poem, and deserting or forgetting his first

" OBSERVATIONS, p. 155.

" MILL. T. edit. Urr. p. 25. v. 111.

meaning, he wantonly and very inconsiderately corrupted the word into *After la gour*. Or accidentally looking back into Speght, and finding he had mistaken Speght's interpretation, thought of this bungling artifice to make all right. Thus much is certain, that Rowley, the pretended composer of these poems, could not possibly have used *Afterla-gour*, the word supposed to have been in the original manuscript, in the sense here required. He never could have confounded the artist with his machine, then well known by this appellation. On the whole, I leave the conclusion to the unprejudiced reader.

That Chatterton was no transcriber, that he neither misunderstood nor misinterpreted antient originals, that he had recourse to glossaries either to accumulate a stock of old words, or in order to substitute old in the place of his own new words, that he sometimes hastily copied, imperfectly remembered, frequently misapprehended, and often superficially or casually inspected those glossaries, that he occasionally fabricated difficult words, in short, that he composed both poems and explanations, is I hope sufficiently clear, from this short sketch of an argument, which forms so considerable a part of Mr. Bryant's very learned vindication of

H

Rowley.

Rowley. Chatterton consulted these helps, not to elucidate the obsolete phrases of an antient writer, but to give his own performances the stamp of antiquity : to darken his own meaning, not to illustrate the obscurities of others. Let us add to his negligence or inexperience, that the glossaries he possessed were often erroneous or incomplete. What he could not find, he made : and often mistook or misrepresented what he found. He sometimes omits to explain his old words : but it is well known, that his poetry and his interpretation were not always written at the same time. Many of his marginal comments were extemporaneous productions at the request of friends. Nor did he always retain the exact signification in which he had first used an old word. Thus was he frequently compelled to depend upon confused recollection, or uncertain conjecture. Thus his explanations are often licentious, or inadequate.

Mr. Bryant frequently repeats an axiom, that every author must know his own meaning. This may be true. But every forger of old poetry does not always know the meaning of other men : that is, he does not always exactly know, either the meaning, or the proper application, of all the antique words

words which he finds it necessary to adopt. Chatterton, however, knew his original and primary meaning. But writing under the constraint and the difficulties of a forgery which consisted in the use of a remote and unfamiliar language, his natural expression was obstructed. What most writers wish to attain, he was compelled to avoid, perspicuity. He was obliged to embarrass a meaning, at first clear. And this he practiced with too little care and judgement. He understood what he wrote, but he could not always explain what he wrote. What he had written, he was afterwards forced to render unintelligible. And in this process, not always managed with sufficient address, he sometimes puzzled both himself and his readers.

Mr. Bryant closes his volume with the following illustration. "Whoever brings a copy of a prior writing, and does not understand that writing, that person cannot be the author. In short, if a boy produces a reputable exercise, and cannot construe it, there is not an usher at a boarding-school but will tell him he did not make it *." But if a master was to

* OBSERVATIONS, p. 585.

order a scholar, to bring an exercise, written in Chaucer's style, and the boy, not having a competent knowledge of old English, could not afterwards very readily explain his task, the master would not tell him that he did not make it because he could not explain it, but would blame him for his unskilful use of Chaucer's language, and direct him to study it with more attention.

IV. HISTORICAL ALLUSIONS. These poems are supposed to contain a fund of references to curious historical facts now forgotten. Mr. Bryant asserts, that, "they abound with abstruse learning, and with continual references to antient history". Again, "There are strong marks of originality, with numberless curious allusions, with references to past histories, which are many times irretrievable. — These poems are too refined and curious, and relate to circumstances too remote and obscure to have proceeded from the young man, to whom the poems have by many been ascribed."

It is asked, how Chatterton could have gained a knowledge of the raven-standard of

¹ OBSERVATIONS, p. 480.

² Ibid. p. 221, 261.

the Danes, or that the raven was revered by that people? We have these instances, in the Tragedy of *ELLA*, a Danish story.

The Danes, wythe terroure rulynge at their hedde,
Threw downe their banner talle, and lyche a raven
fledde^a.

Again, the Danish soldiers say,

'Onne, Ella, onn, we long for bloodie fraie,
We longe to heare the Raven, &c^b.

And the Danish leader Ella says,

Thanne, whanne the Ravenn croakes uponne the playne,
Oh lette ytt be the knelle to myghtie Dacians slayne^c.

And the Chorus says,

Harke the Ravenne flaps hys wing^d.

Mr. Bryant supposes, that this piece of recondite Northern mythology was inaccessiblely shut up in Spelman, Affer, the Saxon Chronicle, Pontanus, and Olaus Wormius^e. But Chatterton seems to have had his intelligence from Thomson's *MASQUE OF ALFRED*, a common play-book, where the Raven - standard of the Danes is thus poetically described.

——— Is not yon pictur'd raven
Their famous magic standard? Emblem fit
To speak the savage genius of the people. ———

^a Ver. 793.

^b Ibid. 664.

^c Ibid. 641.

^d Ibid. 865.

^e OBSERVATIONS, p. 188. seq.

— — — "Tis the same.
 Wrought by the sisters of the Danish king,
 Of furious Ivar, in a midnight hour :
 While the sick moon, at their enchanted song,
 Wrapt in pale tempest, labour'd through the clouds :
 The demons of destruction then, they say,
 Were all abroad, and mixing with their woof
 Their baleful power : the sisters ever sung,
 " Shake, standard, shake this ruin on our foes ! "

And the Hermit says,

The raven droops his wing — and, hark ! the trumpet,
 &c &c.

Let me add, that Chatterton's idea of writing a play on a Danish story might have been suggested by this very Masque. He is allowed to have been a reader of Thomson. It is also to be observed, that both dramas are built on the same point of the Danish history in England, the Landing of the Danes in Somersetshire. One of Chatterton's persons is Hurra. Mr. Bryant says, that the proper name HUBBA might by an *unexperienced transcriber* be easily taken for HURRA^b. It is very true, that Hubba is the right reading, as Chatterton well knew from these lines in his favourite Thomson's Masque.

The valiant HUBBA bites the bloody field,
 With twice six hundred Danes around him strow'd^c.

^f Sc. iv.

^g Ibid. Sc. iii.

^h Ubi sup. p. 175.

ⁱ Sc. iv.

Chatterton, I presume, might have his reasons for converting Hubba into HURRA.

In these poems, Ella is called the warden of Bristol castle, in the Danish wars. But before the Conquest, Bristol was a very inconsiderable place. It is never once mentioned in our histories of those bloody engagements, which were fought all about its neighbourhood between the Saxons and Danes. It did not begin to flourish or to be fortified, till after the total extinction of the Anglo-Saxon government. The first notice of its castle is, under the year 1087^k, in the Saxon Chronicle: which is said by Robert of Gloucester, to have been built by Robert Rufus earl of Gloucester. This must have been about the reign of Rufus. That chronicler says, that earl Robert not only founded the castle, but adorned it with a noble tower, "which of all the tours of Englonde ys yhelde the flour^l." In short, it was one of those new fortresses of the eleventh century, which it was the policy of the Normans, at their accession, to erect in various parts of England, for the security of their dubious title. Had this castle actually ex-

^k Sub. ann. p. 193. 20.

^l Chron. p. 43. edit. Hearne.

existed as a strong western garrison under the wardenship of our hero Ella, and of sufficient consequence to have made a stout resistance against the incursions of the Danes, it must have been mentioned long before by the monkish historians. More especially as they record minutely, many considerable conflicts with the Danish invaders in Somersetshire. Why then is Bristol, with its castle, omitted? I fear we shall find no other accounts of Ella's invincible prowess against the Danes in the ninth century, at or near Bristol, than what are recorded in Chatterton's unpublished History of Bristol, by the monk Turgott, a manuscript of equal authenticity with his TRAGEDY OF ELLA. Mr. Bryant concludes, that Bristol was a place of celebrity even before the time of king Athelstan: because Robert of Gloucester points out Pucklechurch, the place where king Edward, Athelstan's brother, was slain, by its being in the vicinity of Bristol. But Robert of Gloucester, who wrote about 1200, in pointing out an obscure village, refers to the neighbouring town of Bristol, as being then of sufficient and distinguished note. It by no means follows, that Bristol was a place of note, when that event happened^m.

^m Ubi supr. p. 201. Rob. Glouc. p. 277.

The eyes of Power in Goodwyn, and the armour of king Richard, are compared to fiery *gronfires*, or ground-fires". Mr. Bryant observes, that "something is alluded "to which was of a very fearfull nature, and "uncommon appearance." He supposes the allusion to be, to the many fiery eruptions from the earth, which appeared in England during the time of earl Godwyn, and are recorded by Bromton and other early annalists. "What have we similar, says he, by "which these descriptions can be explained? "Nothing, that I am apprised of, now a "days". But of equal antiquity, and still continuing to appear, are the formidable nocturnal meteors in morasses, commonly called *Will of the wisp*, and *Jack a lantern*. From Skinner Chatterton learned, that *Gron* was a marsh, or rather a ditch. He added *fire*, and dignified what every child knows, with a difficult and a pompous name.

It is said, that many circumstances mentioned in these pieces relating to the antiquities of churches and other buildings at Bristol, and not elsewhere to be found, have been verified. I will not deny, that Chatterton might discover parchments of humble

^a T. E. 200. ECL. ii. 45. ^o OBSERVATIONS, p. 208.

prose, containing local memoirs, and authentic deeds illustrating the history of Bristol. He might have discovered biographical diaries, or other notices, of the lives of Cannyng, Ischam and Gorges. Of the three last, who were poets as well as Rowley, various anecdotes are come to light. And the dean of Exeter seems to speak with rapture of the festive party which these four poets must have formed. "When we view Canning, accompanied with these three poets, whose agreeable conversation he has celebrated in the ACCOUNT OF THE FEAST, can we forbear drawing the parallel between this party, and that of Mæcenas, with his three friends, Virgil, Horace, and Varius, united by the similar ties of friendship, genius, and poetry? The comparison, however, will be much to the advantage of Mr. Canning, who not only equalled Mæcenas in liberality, and in the patronage of literature, but was also a better man, and a better poet." I own, I think the dean has carried the parallel rather too far. But every man has his favourite authors. Yet that this worthy mayor of Bristol was a better man than

See J. Oxborn's Milles's ROWLEY, p. 191.

Mæcenas,

Mecenas, I will not dispute. I think however, it may be doubted, whether Canynge was a better poet than Mecenas. If some of Mecenas's poetry had been luckily recovered in the Redcliffe repository with Rowley's and Canynge's, this point might have been decided.

We are told, that many of the incidents in the BATTLE OF HASTINGS, such as the licentiousness of the English army, and the exact discipline of the Norman on the night of the battle, Harold's exploration of the Norman camp, and the reception of his spies of by duke William, Girtha's mistake that the Norman soldiers were priests disguised in armour, with other circumstances, are entirely conformable to the description of this battle in Malmesbury, and the rest of the old Latin chroniclers. To such authors Chatterton could not have had access. But all these particulars, which are represented as mysteries, may be seen in Hollinhead, who translated and incorporated these authors in his voluminous and circumstantial history of England. From thence they have descended into some later historians. I do not particularly recollect in Hollinhead, nor am I

* See Milles's Rowley, pp. 98. 100. 111. etc.

inclined to search in that vast ocean of black letter, whether he has mentioned ROWLAND'S SONGE, with which William in our author begins the battle'. But Chatterton had certainly seen the three elegant volumes of antient ballads. In this poem of the BATTLE OF HASTINGS, the first writer, supposed to be Turgott a cotemporary, is said by doctor Milles to have "pointed out " the origin and use of Stonehenge, so little " known by our antient writers". But what origin, and what uses, are here pointed out, that do not appear in modern books? And it is to be observed, that the writer has assigned almost every origin, and every use, which modern conjectures, or antient historians, have given. This is what Turgott probably would not, or rather could not, have done. Our poet, however, seems most inclined to believe, at least insinuates, that this wonderful monument was erected in consequence of Hengist's massacre. I am happy to find this assignation of Stonehenge, which I cursorily hazarded in my first volume of the History of English poetry, ascertained by so authentic an historian as Turgott! Yet at the same time, he supposes, that it might have

^r B. H. ii. 232.

^s See Milles's ROWLEY, p. 71. seq.

been

been a Druidical temple. And this supposition I afterwards instanced as a proof of Chatterton's forgery, observing, that the notion, that "the Druids constructed this stupendous
 "pile for a place of worship, was a DIS-
 "COVERY reserved for the SAGACITY of a
 "WISER age, and the laborious DISCUSSION
 "of MODERN ANTIQUARIES'." Here I am accused by doctor Milles of wavering between two opinions". Who does not perceive, that this paragraph never was intended as a serious opinion or affirmation? I confess I cannot always treat the strange systems of Stukeley, of which this is a famous one, with the gravity of the president of the antiquarian society. Doctor Milles himself, however, is sometimes disposed to be pleasant: for upon MY AUTHORITY, that is, this my second supposed determination, he proposes to give up my former theory about Hengist's massacre, and to remark the great improbability with which I found that theory on the evidence of the songs of the Saxon minstrels. But I certainly did not mean, that the Saxon minstrels had ever sung a triumphal epinicion on Hengist's

^t Hist. ENGL. POETR. ii. 155.

^u Milles's ROWLEY, p. 76.

massacre.

massacre. It entered of course into their minstrelsy as an historical event, where it was undoubtedly dressed up in their own favourable colours. These rude songsters were not so national, and so nice, as we may suppose. In their metrical chronicles they recited what happened without much selection or suppression. Thus it transpired as a piece of history from the Saxon to the Welsh bards, who by new aggravations would naturally turn it to the disadvantage of their enemies. Too palpable therefore is the modern delicacy of the writer of the **BATTLE OF HASTINGS**, who thus squeamishly introduces this tale of Saxon perfidy :

I, tho a Saxon, yet the truth will telle^w.

But the learned dean's strongest proof of a knowledge of genuine history in this poem, and by which he judges it to be most unquestionably authenticated, is the agreement of the names of the Norman warriors, with those printed in our historians from the Chronicle of Normandy and the Battell-Abbey roll. "At least," he adds, names so "nearly resembling them, that allowing for "mistakes of transcribers, and difference of "spelling, they may be satisfactorily veri-

^w B. H. i. 312.

"fied."

“fied.” I draw a contrary and the most natural conclusion. I am of opinion that on this occasion Chatterton used a book not yet mentioned, Fuller’s CHURCH-HISTORY. How he could get access to it, shall be shewn hereafter. In this book, all the rolls and catalogues are drawn together, from Hollinfhead, Fox, and Stowe, and comparatively arranged.

I cannot but here observe, that Chatterton could not have chosen from our history, a more commodious subject for a poem than the Battle of Hastings, exclusive of its susceptibility of poetical ornament, and of its coincidence with his predominant predilection for antiquarian imagery. This subject possesses the singular advantage of having the names of its heroes, on one side at least, enumerated at large in an original cotemporary record.

Meanwhile, how comes it pass, that so many of the Normans are mentioned in this poem, and so few of the Saxons? It is strange that the original author Turgott, an

* Milles’s ROWLEY, p. 152.

† Edit. Lond. 1655. Cent. xi. B. ii. p. 155. seq. At the end follows the Ely tablet, where is the name of Nigel a Norman knight, used by Chatterton, on which Mr. Bryant has expended a waste of learned research, OBS. p. 346.

Anglo-Saxon, should not have commemorated more of his countrymen. Why does he dwell so largely, and almost solely, on the names of his enemies? For this plain reason. Chatterton had no long roll of Saxon names, to which he might refer. Of the Normans he had a list of eight hundred, from which he might chuse at pleasure. Not twenty Saxon names, including Harold's three brothers, Tofti, Girtha, and Leofwyne, known from our historians, are here recited. All these, however, are supposed by Mr. Bryant to be the names of Saxons "of great rank" and eminence in their time, and of large "possessions". He adds, that all these names are to be found in Doomsday-book. Now that curious and ample record, containing the forfeitures of all the property of England at the Conquest, then in the possession of Saxon lords, is absolutely a Saxon nomenclature. I will not suppose that Chatterton had seen Doomsday-book. He took his few Saxon names, by memory, from plays, poems, novels, histories, and other books of entertainment. Had he taken a hundred more, they would all perhaps have tallied with Doomsday-book. It would have been ex-

² Ut supr. p. 373.

extraordinary indeed, not to have discovered parallels to these few names, in that comprehensive repository of antient hereditary property.

Mr. Bryant is of opinion, that the BATTLE OF HASTINGS contains a *mass of occult intelligence*, in many *obscure references*, and *dark hints*. This is a mass which I cannot penetrate. The poem, as we have seen, is supposed to have been originally written by Turgott, a coeval ecclesiastic. But a writer so connected with the times, a professed historian, and who was here the author of a separate and distinct narrative of this single event, must have treated the subject with minuteness and particularity. He was drawing from the life, and recording recent facts. This newly discovered manuscript of Turgott, must have mentioned anecdotes not now to be found in our histories, or have related those already recorded, with additional circumstances, with a less degree of generality, and a variety of new particulars. But unluckily, we see little more than the well-known, established, leading incidents. Some few poetical or imaginary insertions excepted, this memorable Battle is much the same in Hollinshead as in Turgott. I am speaking of real facts, such as properly belong

to this event as a piece of history, and such as Turgott would have naturally told. As to those *occult intelligences*, instanced by Mr. Bryant, *Tynyan's necromancy*, the *goats of Conyan made tame*, and the souls of the *fairy-stricken* people that wander to *Offa's dyke*, they are extraneous, and the sport of the poet. Tynyan is an old British king in Geoffrey of Monmouth. So little is known of this monarch, that he was safely and easily converted into a necromancer. The *Goats of Conyan* might be an allusion, to amuse and deceive, without any meaning at the bottom. We must not always treat fancies as mysteries. There are now remembered many romantic traditions, such as that of the souls of the *fairy-stricken people*. But this might have sprung from Chatterton's imagination, for it is by no means out of the style and cast of modern fiction. All these may be said to have been added to Turgott by Rowley. It is at least as probable, that they came from Chatterton. They certainly did not fall from the pen of an archdeacon, a prior of an episcopal church, and a conscientious annalist. At least they would not have been introduced by Turgott into the grave dignity of an historic detail.

Mr.

Mr. Bryant justly observes, that " whoever takes an antient piece of history for a subject, will dwell upon the well-known facts. He will never amuse his reader with " dark and unsatisfactory allusions". I grant, a forger of an old historical poem, for an obvious reason, will dwell on the well-known facts. His additions will be those of decoration only. As to *dark* and *unsatisfactory* allusions, these he may safely hazard. They will add to the disguise, and lead to no detection. He may safely deviate into such innocent fictions as I have mentioned. In describing a real battle fought nine hundred years ago, he will throw in such incidents of the fortune of a field, as are of general nature, and must belong to every battle. He will feign or borrow, without danger of discovery by violating historical truth, deaths, distortions, and wounds, rivers of blood, and hills of slain, clattering of armour, and showers of arrows. He may however be too cautious in attending to truth and probability, and avoid such gross mistakes, as an antient author would not have avoided. In describing a battle fought between the Normans and Saxons, he will perhaps say nothing of gun-

* Ubi supr. p. 404.

powder and great guns, which a celebrated author of the fifteenth century has not scrupled to introduce in describing the Siege of Troy.

V. BATTLE OF HASTINGS, and ELLA A TRAGEDY. These are two poems, which although partaking in the strongest degree of the general marks of forgery discernible in all the rest, yet as subject to peculiar circumstances, I must consider separately.

I begin with the BATTLE OF HASTINGS. On this, resulting from nature of subject, some suspicious circumstances necessarily occurred under the last Head of HISTORICAL ALLUSIONS. I mean now to examine it in the view of an imitation of POPE'S HOMER.

It is not denied, that this poem is copied from the Iliad. Doctor Milles, for that reason, has placed it first, in the collection: and he is of opinion that "it not only COPIES but EXCEEDS Homer."

I believe it will be difficult to prove, that Rowley had ever seen the Iliad, either in the original Greek, or in a prose translation. It is evident that Rowley's cotemporary Lydgate, a scholar, and one who might then be

^b Milles's ROWLEY, p. 45.

called a general reader, was totally unacquainted with Homer. He has written professedly on Homer's subject, the siege of Troy. But his author was Guido de Colonna, who turned, about the twelfth century, the story of the Trojan war into a romance, not from Homer, but from Dictys Cretensis. And this, in England at least, was the fashionable Iliad of the fifteenth century. Where had Rowley ever seen a copy of Homer? In the library of his convent at Keinsham, or of the Carmelites at Bristol, where he is said to have studied? How had he acquired a knowledge of the Greek language? It was not at that time either taught or cultivated in England. Were Rowley's connections with any of those few English scholars who now travelled into that country where the Greek writers were revived? The Redcliffe chest has given us no information of a his learned character. Surely, one who must have had so full and familiar an acquaintance with Homer, as to transfuse his descriptions with so much ease and intelligence, must have left papers or parchments of a classical or a literary kind. We are told of his Saxon, but not of his Grecian manuscripts. Nor do I conceive that Rowley could have seen a prose Latin translation of
the

the Iliad. Leontius Pilatus, one of the learned Constantinopolitan exiles, translated the Iliad into Latin prose, with part of the Odyssey, at the desire of Boccace, about the year 1360, as we learn from Petrarch's Epistles to Boccace^c. But this was never published, and went no further than the public library of Venice^d. The first prose Latin Iliad that appeared in public, was by Laurentius Valla, and it was printed at Brescia in Italy, in the year 1497. This came too late to have been seen by Rowley. We are therefore left to conclude, that an English Iliad was used on this occasion. But Rowley never had seen the versions by Chapman, Hobbes, or Pope. Can it now be doubted that the BATTLE OF HASTINGS was written by Chatterton?

Indeed, with regard to the purport of our main argument, it matters not, which of the three English translations was used by Chatterton. But it is more than probable, that this general reader and imitator of our modern poets, could not have been unacquainted with POPE'S HOMER. Hence the Homeric circumstances of the BATTLE OF

^c SENIL. Lib. ii. Cap. 5.

^d Hody, GR. ILLUSTR. Lib. i. p. 5. seq.

HASTINGS. Hence the contexture of the versification, and animation of the narrative. Hence, to change Rowley for Chatterton, and to use doctor Milles's forcible expressions, " he makes his numbers harmonious, without " weakening the force of his ideas: he is " sonorous but not bombast: and can describe the great convulsions of nature, in " terms more majestic and significant than " Addison's, *Wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds* *."

But I lay the greatest stress on the comparisons, that ornamental part of POPE's HOMER so likely to strike a young mind. The dean of Exeter observes, " The rapidity of Rowley's imagination is a stranger " to repose: the mind of the reader can " hardly have digested the torrent of similes " on Kenelwalche's beauty, when he finds " the valour of Adhelm, celebrated by three " allusions in the course of one stanza†." Who but a boy, fond of the florid and the descriptive, and unable to check his career of fancy, could have poured forth such a torrent of indigestible similes? His imagination, a *stranger to repose*, destroys even the repose of his readers.

* Milles's ROWLEY, p. 114.

† Ibid. p. 134.

Our author compares a hero slain and stretched on the ground, to an oak just felled. He adds, that the oak was felled,

To live a second time upon the main ^g.

In Pope, the oak is only "to become a mast
"for some great admiral ^h." In Homer it is converted into ship-timber. Here, says doctor Milles, "the oak *living again on the main*, dignifies Homer's image, which "Pope's translation has weakened and de-
"graded ⁱ." But it does not follow, that if Chatterton copied POPE'S HOMER, he therefore always used Pope's words or form of expression. It was easy here, as in many more instances, to enliven and improve: and Chatterton has plainly done it in a line perfectly Popian. Nor has Pope here degraded Homer. At least he thought there was a sufficient dignity in words borrowed from Milton. But it is not hard to prove, that Chatterton sometimes uses Pope's expressions. Thus, for Pope's *silver cuishes* ^k, we have in the BATTLE OF HASTINGS, his *Cuisse of silver* ^l. In the families, Chatterton frequently avails himself of Pope's rhymes. I must add, that the prolix circumstantial Comparison

^g B. H. i. 369.

^h B. xvi. 591.

ⁱ Ubi sup. p. 82.

^k Il. B. xix. 398.

^l B. H. ii. 228.

did not exist in the fifteenth century. It was imported into our poetry by Spenser.

I have here mentioned the similes on Kenelwalche's beauty. In these, as we have seen long ago, the rosy lips, the snowy bosom, the melodious voice, the auburn locks and the taper arms, of the Saxon dame, are most luxuriantly illustrated. Mr. Bryant supposes, what is not held by doctor Milles, that these comparisons originated from Turgott. But he has himself suggested a consideration which materially tends to invalidate this hypothesis, which may be extended to Rowley, and which at last naturally brings home these high colourings of female beauty to a youth of strong passions and warm feelings. He very justly remarks, that Turgott the prior of saint Cuthbert's convent at Durham, "expends more time in speaking of
"the appearance and beauty of this lady,
"than is well decent for a disciple of saint
"Cuthbert, and one devoted to celibacy and
"the cloister^m."

^m OBSERVATIONS, p. 252. Of this very ungallant fraternity, Robert Graystones, a monk of Durham, author of an *HISTORIA DUNELMENSIS*, about the year 1336, has the following anecdote, which I literally translate. "In easter week, 1333, king Edward the third came to Durham, and was

On the whole, as Pope perpetually varies, dilates, and adorns, the simplicity of Homer, I perceive many passages which Chatterton has imitated from the English version, not to be traced in the Greek original. But no further investigation seems necessary. I no longer argue, that the BATTLE OF HASTINGS is a forgery, because Chatterton produced the first part as his own, and afterwards the second as the work of Rowley". Whether Chatterton himself chose the subject from his fondness for old English manners and events, or whether really some historical manuscript on the subject might be found among the Redcliffe parchments, he had

"entertained in the Prior's lodgings. The next evening queen
 "Philippa came in one day from Knaresburch to Durham;
 "and not knowing the custom of the monastery, passed
 "through the gate to the Prior's lodgings, and there supped
 "with the king. When they went to rest after supper, it was
 "intimated to his majesty by one of the monks, that Saint
 "Cuthbert did not love the company of women. The queen
 "immediately arose at the king's command; and covered only
 "with a petticoat and cloak, hastily returned by the gate
 "through which she came, and went to the castle: praying
 "the Saint, that he would not punish her for what she had
 "done through ignorance." CAP. xxxii. Wharton's ANGL.
 SACR. i. 760.

" See HIST. ENG. POETR. ii. ADD. EM. 164. And Milles's
 ROWLEY, p. 35.

evidently

evidently recourse to that work, among his favourite English poets, where was the best stock of materials and decorations for describing a battle, and with these he constructed his **BATTLE OF HASTINGS**.

I come now to the **TRAGEDY OF ELLA**. This is a Tragedy written at a time when plays, if any existed, were nothing more than a ballad or solitary recital, without plot or dialogue, and incapable of representation. The piece before us is a regular drama. A stiffness of obsolete style, a cumbersome stanza, and prolix soliloquies, although the reciprocation of the dialogue is often entirely conformable to the modern practice, are almost the only obstacles that render it unfit for the stage. It has the interposition of a Chorus of Minstrels, which adapt their odes or songs to the moral of the piece. The fable is opened, and the catastrophe produced, according to the prescriptions of Aristotelic severity. The events and characters are few, and the business not intricate.

Some of these reasons have been brought to prove, that it could not have been written by Chatterton. But they operate with much greater force against the probability that it was written by Rowley; even if we should allow no more to Chatterton than those

inconsiderable advantages which doctor Milles is pleased to grant him, that he might perhaps have just dipped into Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton, and Pope; and seen a few plays at the Bristol theatre°. But let us suppose, that some efforts were now making towards the legitimate drama: those efforts never could have produced a performance so finished as ELLA. Nor would such high improvements in a popular exhibition so soon have been forgotten. Polite manners were beginning to emerge, and would not have suffered a quick, much less a total relapse.

It is well known to every searcher into our antient stage, that the miserable interludes even of the decline of the sixteenth century, are infinitely subordinate to every other species of poetry then subsisting: that they are utterly destitute of contrivance, character, sentiment, and even of common decorum. The truth is, the Tragedy of ELLA, to which I will add the imperfect Tragedy of GOODWYN, in which is the fine ode on Freedom, is indebted to the Grecian school, revived in the eighteenth century. Both are the effusions of a young mind, warm from studying Mr. Mason's ELFRIDA and CARACTACUS.

° Milles's ROWLEY, p. 162.

It is another unsurmountable objection to the antiquity and authenticity of ELLA, that the subject is historical or civil. Representations of religious subjects, were only fashionable in the reign of Edward the fourth. And these, exclusive of the subject, by no means resembled what we call a Play. They made a part of the great drama of superstition. Rowley, as a priest, was very unlikely to have begun this heterodox innovation, and to have been the first to compose a play not religious. The pious mayor of Bristol never would have patronised so profane a confessor. Churches were our chief theatres before the Reformation: and the *dygne maistre* Canynge, the builder of a church, would have more naturally employed the dramatic talents of Rowley, to decorate his new edifice with the exhibition of a splendid MYSTERY. If Rowley had penetration and taste, yet he had caution, he had prudence, and a reverence for his establishment. But Rowley proceeds still farther. He openly defends his new attempt, not in a palliative apology, but in a peremptory declaration of his opinion of the absurdity of scriptural plays.

Playes

Playes made from hallie tales I holde unmeete,
 Lette somme greate storie of a manne be songe ^p.

This was too bold and too refined a philosophy for a priest of the fifteenth century. The first line is absolute heresy, and would have exposed the writer to the censure of the church. But this passage is perfectly consistent with the general spirit and turn of the Epistle in which it appears: and which, according to the Dean of Exeter, contains "specimens of the author's abilities in judicious criticism, and pleasant raillery, in neither of which does he appear at all inferior to Pope¹." This is an unlucky concession!

We are told, that this Tragedy abounds with lessons of morality: it could not therefore have been the work of a dissolute and unprincipled youth. Chatterton certainly knew better, than to disgust every decent reader by indulging his disposition to profligacy. But vitious sentiments would at once have destroyed his imposture. His purpose was deception. He was writing in the character of a priest. Yet had not this been the case, I cannot conceive, with doctor Milles, "How his mind must have laboured under the burthen of describing patheti-

¹ Ep. M. C. 43.

² Milles's ROWLEY, p. 163.

"cally

“cally the pleasures of virtue, and the
“rewards of religion !”

Doctor Milles insists much, on the great knowledge of men and manners in *ELLA* *. I know not that there are any notations of character, nice delineations of nature, and situations of strong interest, but such as a young reader might easily transplant from a thousand modern tragedies. But we will allow that there is great nature in this piece. And here we must recur to the vigorous prematurity of Chatterton's understanding. It was not in books only that this boy shewed his amazing intuition and comprehension. He looked on life with the same penetrating and pervading eye. His observation on things was equally quick and extensive. His humour, his knowledge of the world, his attention to character, and his general perception of the modes of life, appear in his numerous satirical pieces both in prose and verse. When, after an education in a charity school, he was dismissed from the attorney's desk, and came to London a stripling of seventeen, we are surprised, to use the expressive words of Mr. Walpole, “at the rapidity with which he seized all

* Milles's *ROWLEY*, p. 19.

* *Ubi* *supr.* p. 159.

“ the

“ the topics of conversation then in vogue,
 “ whether of politics, literature, or fashion.”
 We wonder at the address, the command,
 the facility, the versatility of mind, the
 accommodation of sentiment, with which in a
 short space of time he composed a variety of
 pieces, and on subjects which usually require
 long observation and experience.

Although many arguments drawn from
 style in general, have before shewn this tra-
 gedy to be spurious, I must here give a spe-
 cimen of dramatic style in particular, which
 will add to the proof. Nothing can be more
 in the manner of modern tragedy than the
 following dialogue, to mention no other,
 consisting of exclamations, short and hasty
 sentences, sudden transitions, and frequent
 interruption.

EG. Oh Ella! EL. Ah! that seemlykeene^u to me
 Speeketh a legendary tale of woe.

EG. Birtha is — EL. What? Where? Howe? Saie, what
 of thee?

EG. Gone — EL. Gone, ye goddes! EG. Alas, ytte ys
 too true!

Ye faintes, hee dies awaie with myckle wee!

Ella! What, Ella? oh! he lyves agen.

EL. Cal me notte Ella: I am hymme no moe.

* LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF CHATTERTON'S MISCEL-
 LANIES. Strawberry-Hill, 1779. p. 53.

^u Appearance.

Where

Where ys shee gon ? Awaie ? Ah, speake ! How ? When ?

EL. EG. I will. — Caparyson a score of stedes, flie, flie.

Where ys she ? Swythynne speake, or instant thou shalte die.

EG. Styлле thie loud rage, and here thou whatte I knowe.

EL. Oh, speake ! EG. Lycke primrose, &c *.

A better scene for shewing the shrug and the start to the greatest advantage, never appeared at Drury-Lane theatre.

Before I dismiss this tragedy, I cannot but observe, that there is something too ingenious and artificial, in Rowley's assuming this mode of celebrating an old champion of Bristol, supposing that such a one ever existed : and in dressing up an antient tale with a plot and fictitious characters. Had he been capable of writing a tragedy, it is improbable that he should have taken a story from such a remote antiquity. It is more probable, that this story was selected for a tragedy, in a refined age, when poetry looks back on antient manners with delight as most striking to the imagination, and as most fit for her operations ; and when the arts of writing had been carried to perfection.

Upon the whole of this Head, if there are such things as principles of analogy, if the rules which criticism has established for

* T. E. 1145.

judging of the age of a poem, are beyond the caprice of conjecture, then are the TRAGEDY OF ELLA, and the BATTLE OF HASTINGS, modern compositions: if they are antient, then are the elegancies of Gibbon's style coeval with the deplorable prose of Caxton.

VI. COMPARISON OF CHATTERTON'S POEMS WITH THE POEMS ATTRIBUTED TO ROWLEY. It has been urged, and for an obvious reason, that the poems acknowledged by Chatterton to be of his own composition, are of a cast much inferiour to those which he produced as written by Rowley. If this be True, we should remember, that Chatterton lavished all his powers on the counterfeit Rowley, with whom he intended to astonish or to deceive the world, and that his Miscellanies were the temporary progeny of indigence, inconvenience, and distraction. That the former pieces, were composed, with one uniform object in view, in a state of leisure and repose, through the course of nearly one year and a half; and the latter, amidst the want of common necessaries, in disquietude and in dissipation, at the call of booksellers, and often on occasional topics, within four months. But I do not grant
this

this boasted inequality. If there is any, at least the same hand appears in both. The miscellanies contain many strokes of uncommon spirit and imagination, and such as would mark any boy of seventeen for a genius. Let me add, that both collections contain an imagery of the same sort. Mr. Walpole observes, with his usual elegant originality of style and sentiment, that Chatterton and the supposed Rowley “ were “ animated by so congenial a spirit, that the “ compositions of the one can hardly, very “ hardly, be discriminated from the other.— “ The same soul animates all, and the limbs “ that would remain to Rowley would indeed, be *disjecti membra poetæ*. Rowley “ would not only have written with a spirit “ by many centuries posterior to that of his “ age, but his mantle escaping the hands of “ all his cotemporaries and successors, must “ have been preserved nothing the worse for “ time, and reserved to invest Chatterton “ from head to foot’.”

In the Pseudo-Rowley, we are imposed upon by the charm of old spelling and old language. Let us, with the least verbal variation, cloath an allegorical description of the power

* LETTER, ut supr. p. 6.

of a friend's poetry, from Chatterton's miscellanies, in the orthography of antiquity. We shall think we are reading a chorus in the Tragedy of ELLA or of GOODWYN.

Whanne goulden Auctomne, wreeth'd in rypende corne,
From porpel clusterrs preste the froathie wyne,
Thie poynctelle dyd hys fallowe browes adorne,
And made the bewtyes of the seasonne thyne.

Pale ruggyd Winterr, bendynge oer hys tredde,
Hys gryzzled heare bedropte wyth ycie deawe,
Hys eyen a duskie lyghte, congeel'd and dedde,
Hys roabe a tynge of bryghte ethereal blewe :

Hys trayne a mottled, fanguyne fabble, clowde,
He lympe alonge the rouffet dreerie moore ;
Whylst rysynge whyrlwyndes, blastynge keene and lowde,
Rowle the whyte fourges to the foundynge shore, &c.—

Faunfie, whose varyous fygure-tynceturd veste
Was everr chaungynge to a diffrente hewe,
Her hedde with varied bayes and flourets dreste,
Herr eyne two spanggles of the mornynge dewe :

Ynn daunfing actytude she swepte the strynge,
And nowe she soares, and now agayne descendes,
And nowe, reclynynge onne the Zephyr's wynges,
Unto the velvette-vestyd mee ^z she bends.

Peace, dekkt ynne alle the softnesse of the dove,
Overre thie passiouns spredde herre sylver plewme, &c ^a.

^z Meadow.

^a See Chatterton's MISCELLANIES, Lond. 1778. p. 67, 68.
The ingenious author of CURSORY OBSERVATIONS ON THE
POEMS

It has been asserted, that there are many attorney's clerks in town, who by reading plays and the monthly miscellanies, and frequenting the theaters, get a better knack of writing than was to be found in Chatterton^b. In the mean time, it is never recollected, at least it is never acknowledged, that in Rowley, although he does not suffer our attention to flag, there are many flimzy lines, many puerile passages, examples of want of judgment, and strokes of a young composer. The quick repetition of his shewy comparisons, and his indulgence in description, the favourite field of a youthful poet, have been before observed. In the BATTLE OF HASTINGS, we have the following description of the morning.

And now the greie-eyd morne, with violets drest,
Shakyng the dewdrops on the flourie meedes,
Fled with her rosie radiance to the west ;
Forth from the easterne gatte the fyerie steedes,
Of the bryght sunne awaytynge spirits leads ;
The sunne in fierie pomp entron'd on hie, &c.

Who does not see, that this, with twenty others, is such a description, spun from the

POEMS OF ROWLEY, has been beforehand with me in this sort of tryal. But mine was made, before I had seen his very sensible and conclusive performance.

^b Bryant, ubi supr. p. 491.

many-

many-coloured woof of modern imagery, as young adventurers in poetry, whether young apprentices or young academics, hazard in a Magazine? Yet this is a morning, which, in the opinion of the Dean of Exeter, has those graces that "make the Mornings of Homer" and Virgil insipid in the comparison^c. Soon afterwards, we have the following touches of not the most humble bombast. "The sun, having risen three hours, beheld" "the fields of Hastings, floating with illuminated gore; and besmearing his locks" "with the steam of the bloody vapours," "pushed on his chariot with unusual rapidity, and hastened to cleanse his polluted" "brows in the hissing ocean^d." The reserved and the gentle Virgil has only feigned, that the sun foretold the murder of Cesar, by hiding his bright head in obscurity. But the learned doctor Milles is of opinion, that "these beautiful images of Rowley greatly" "surpass that of Virgil, where he makes the" "sun express his abhorrence of Cesar's" "assassination^e." What can be more foolishly fanciful, excusable only from a boy of fifteen,

^b B. H. ii. 211. Milles's ROWLEY, p. 116.

^c B. H. ii. 561.

^d Ubi supr. p. 142. See Virg. GEORG. i. 460.

than the following thought of the appearance of gushing blood tinged by the moon ?

Reflected by the moone seemd rubies mixt wyth pearles ^f.

But we are taught implicitly to believe, that there are no instances of false taste, and of the bloated sublime, in Rowley. Even in the midst of pathos, he is frequently descriptive and ornamental. In the Pastorals, his distressed shepherds do not, as the Dean of Exeter apprehends, complain quite in the stile of the Mantuan shepherds, deprived of their lands by Augustus ; but say, as I have before observed to another purpose, that England wears a bloody dress, and stains her face with the gore of her champions, and that Confusion sails through air in bloody garments. One of them, as we have seen, closes his bitter complaint with this very unpathetic and unpastoral idea, which flowed from Chatterton's attachment to antient manners, that " the portcullis of the castle of " his heart was fallen ^g ! " The common fault of most pastorals is, that the shepherds are too elegant. It is seldom that they are blamed for conversing with a figurative sublimity. In the fourth Eclogue, *twa pynnyng maydens* lament their lovers slain at the battle of Saint

^f B. H. ii. 40.

^g Ecl. ii. 50. 57.

Alban's

Alban's, in a trite tissue of poetical and very general imagery. I do not mean to insinuate, that all these specimens shew a want of genius. Perhaps some of them prove the very contrary. In a young mind imagination is not always just. And on the same principles, many of the absurdities in Chatterton's miscellanies might be defended. In the mean time, in proving that Rowley has his faults as well as Chatterton, I am not conscious that I have exaggerated matters, by an unfair display of the worst passages. My opponents have certainly done this, in their attempt to expose the imperfections of Chatterton's acknowledged poetry, and of its inferiority to Rowley^h.

^h I must here observe, that Mr. Bryant has contrasted the first twenty lines of Chatterton's *CONSULIAD*, with a passage taken, as he says, from a poem called the *CONSULTATION*, written by one of Chatterton's intimate friends, and of the same age. The contrast is intended to shew, how much Chatterton was outdone by one of his young friends on a similar subject. *OBSERVATIONS*, p. 491. seq. But, as I am informed by Mr. Steevens, the lines quoted by Mr. Bryant from the *CONSULTATION*, are stolen, with little alteration, by Chatterton's friend, whoever he was, from the beginning of "PATRIOTISM, a Mock-heroic in six cantos," published in 1765, reprinted the next year, and written by Mr. Thomas Bentley, the critic's son. I quote Bentley's lines, that they may be compared with those produced by Mr. Bryant.

Twass

VII. MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

In these poems there is no learning. I mean, Gothic Learning : such as the pedantry of a learned priest in the fifteenth century would have exhibited. There are no allusions or references to the classics of the dark ages. Our antient writers are perpetually shewing the small stock of knowledge which they possessed, by quoting the few authors, and those of a particular cast, then in vogue. A studious ecclesiastic of this period would have given us a variety of useless authorities from Aristotle, from Boethius and from the Fathers. Even allowing that the supposed Rowley was cultivated in literature beyond his times, we see no marks of a better learning. Had the writer of these poems ever known,

Tw'as night ; the voice of jollity was hush'd,

Doz'd all her vot'ries, reasonably flush'd ;

Song, argument, invention, laughter, jest,

Wit, bawdry, criticism, had reel'd to rest :

Scandal hah empty'd all his tub on Bute,

Abuse of Royalty itself was mute.

Sleep in his pleasing bands had all thing ty'd,

All but the eyes of disappointed pride.

She lay revolving in her anxious mind

How Resignation had too much resign'd, &c.

Seeking repose from side to side she flings,

No change of posture pause of anguish brings, &c.

N

I think

I think he would have cited or named, at least some of the Latin poets.

In these poems we have no Religion. I do not mean that we have no recommendations to virtue, or touches of morality. But they are not tinged with a due share of what the French call *onction*. I mean, they have no prolix devotional episodes, such as would have naturally flowed from a writer of Rowley's profession and character. Instead of addresses to the HOLY VIRGIN, we have long and laboured invocations to Truth, to Hope, to Content, and other divinities of the pagan creed, or rather of the creed of modern poetry. Rowley would have interspersed his poetry with texts of scripture. Lydgate, in the SIEGE of THEBES, quotes Saint Luke, to prove that avarice, ambition, and envy, are the primary causes of war. Had Rowley written the BALADE OF CHARITIE, instead of an ingenious apologue, enlivened with agreeable incidents and pleasing descriptions, he would have given us a tedious yet edifying homily in rhyme, not without frequent confirmations of his doctrine from the Meditations of Saint Bernard, and from Saint Paul to the Corinthians. With all his poetry, he would never have made a ballad on charity so poetical.

We

We miss the marks of another sort of reading in these poems, and which a real Rowley would have shewn, I mean of old romances. To our old poets, the most celebrated achievements and champions of the fabulous chivalry, the Round table with sir Lancelot and sir Tristram, and Charlemagne with his twelve peers, were the favourite and eternal topics of allusion. Particularly, to this sort of allusion, a large field was naturally opened in the songs of the minstrels, who accompany the lists in the Interlude of the TOURNAMENT. But instead of celebrating king Arthur, or any other distinguished chief of the romantic story, which the subject dictated, in one of the two odes, where they are called upon to sing "somme actyonn dyre of auntyante kynges," William the conquerour is described, poetically enough, chasing the stag in a dreary forest. In the other, we have an allegorical description of BATTAYLE subdued by PLEASURE¹. In the first of these, Chatterton was in his walk of antient English history. In

¹ In which are these lines, v. 166.

Wreathedge with floures of aiglentine, —
Hylte hys sworde and gaberdyne.
Plainly from Collins's Odes,
And hid't in wreaths of flowers his bloodless sword.

the second, his knowledge of modern imagery appears.

Had such a poet as Rowley existed in the fifteenth century, he would have been idolized by his age, he would have been complimented by cotemporary writers, and his works would have been multiplied by numerous manuscripts, which would have now been remaining in our libraries. He would have been printed by Caxton, who diligently searched after all the poetry of his times, and would have descended in repeated editions to posterity. His life would have been written by Bale, who mentions obscure authors, now deservedly forgotten: and by the classical Leland, he would have been undoubtedly recorded, as the great and rare scholar, who understood Greek in the reign of Edward the fourth. That this collection of poems should subsist in one copy only, and that unseen, unknown, nor ever once transcribed, for so long a period, is incredible. That such a prodigy should have been suppressed for three hundred years, is inconsistent

But perhaps Rowley, in the course of his extensive Greek reading, borrowed the image, from whence Collins undoubtedly took it, from Callistratus's beautiful Greek ode, or scolion, on Harmodius and Aristogeiton, preserved by Athenaeus, DEIPNOS. xv. 695. A. edit. Casaub.

with

with the common equity and the common curiosity of mankind, and with that notice which distinguished merit so naturally demands. Excellence must struggle into observation. Beauty cannot be long concealed. *Diu celari non poterit.* A meteor will attract every eye.

It is with diffidence and reluctance that I dissent from Mr. Bryant, whose uncommon learning, and ingenious conjectures, have diffused so much rational illustration over the most doubtful and difficult parts of antient history. He observes, "We may not be able
"to account any more for these manuscripts
"being so long neglected, than for those of
"Hesychius, Phedrus, and Velleius Pater-
"culus^k." The cases are not quite parallel. These authors, once in vogue, sunk into oblivion on the irresistible destruction of polite literature. When knowledge returned, they were restored and rescued from neglect. He adds, that many manuscripts of the *same nature*, lie concealed and disregarded in our public libraries. None, I believe, of the same species and importance. It is often asked, continues our sagacious critic, why Rowley is not mentioned by Bale or Leland. I trust, I have assigned the true reason. Those biographers, he subjoins,

^k OBSERVATIONS, p. 459.

have

have not mentioned Robert of Gloucester : and why might they not have omitted Rowley ? But Robert of Gloucester was an obscure unpopular chronicler. They could not have been blind to the lustre of Rowley's name. Another cause is alleged, that there are strong marks of party in these poems, and that therefore they were suppressed. It is indeed too true, that our author is sometimes a Yorkist and sometimes a Lancastrian. But we will suppose that his Yorkism predominated. He was therefore of course proscribed in the reign of Henry the seventh. Why were not the works of the Lancastrian Lydgate, the great and the perpetual panegyrist of king Henry the sixth, exterminated by Edward the fourth, or condemned to an inaccessible chest secured by six locks ? This reasoning, I fear, is too refined.

VIII. CHARACTER AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF CHATTERTON. It is asked, with some degree of plausibility, how could Chatterton, who was educated in a charity school, where only writing and arithmetic were taught, produce such fine pieces of poetry, which shew marks of more liberal pursuits, and studies of another nature ? In the same

¹ Bryant, ubi supr. p. 460.

general way of putting a question, it may be asked, how could that idle and illiterate fellow Shakespeare, who was driven out of Warwickshire for deer-stealing, write the tragedy of OTHELLO? I give as general an answer, that the powers of unconquerable mind outgo plans of education and conditions of life. The enthusiasm of intellectual energy surmounts every impediment to a career that is pressing forward to futurity.

Ergo vivida vis animi pervicit, et extra
Processit longe flammantia moenia mundi *.

But let us attend to a few particulars, which have not yet been distinctly stated, and properly digested. Our charity-boy Chatterton, in his tenth year began to hire books from a circulating library at Bristol. It is a strong argument on the part of my hypothesis, that from his earliest age, he was studious to the most uncommon degree. Between his eleventh and twelfth years, he wrote a catalogue of the books he had read to the number of seventy. The usher of the school, Mr. Thomas Philips, was *fmit with the love of sacred song*: and sometimes relaxed the duties of the mechanical penman, by writing poetry in the magazines. To this

* Lucret. i. 73.

illicit practice he seduced some of his pupils : and by his example or encouragement, many of the senior scholars were easily tempted to strew the thorny paths of arithmetic with flowers, and to try their hands at verses. Chatterton was now almost twelve : and although not in the higher classes, seems to have shared in the general emulation. Yet, as it appears, with privacy. His first poetical production, when he was now aged only eleven years and five months, is a satire on some methodist, such a one as it was easy to find at Bristol, and is entitled, *THE APOSTATE WILL*. It has a degree of humour, and an ease of versification, which are astonishing in such a child. About the same time, having now received confirmation from the bishop, a ceremony which struck his imagination, and on which he made very serious and sensible remarks, he wrote eighteen lines on the day of judgement, and paraphrased the ninth chapter of Job, and some chapters of Isaiah. We are told by his sister, that “ he had been *gloomy* from “ the time he began to learn, but we re- “ marked he was more *cheerful* after he “ began to write poetry ”.

ⁿ See Milles's ROWLEY, p. 9.

Thus

Thus on the chill Lapponian's dreary land,
 For many a long month lost in snow profound,
 When Sol from Cancer sends the season bland,
 And in their northern caves the storms are bound;
 From silent mountains, straight with startling sound,
 Torrents are hurl'd, green hills emerge, and lo,
 The trees with foliage, cliffs with flowers are crown'd,
 Pure rills through vales of verdure warbling go,
 And wonder, love, and joy, the peasant's heart o'erflow°.

Mr. Bryant affirms, that Chatterton shewed no parts at school, and acquaints us, that "the master of the school, Mr. Haynes, "is still alive, who says, that he was not a "boy of extraordinary parts, nor did he "make any display of abilities, during the "time that he was at school, which was till "he was fourteen and an half^p." I have all due respect for the capability and veracity of Mr. Haynes, the worthy master of Colston's charity-school at Bristol. But for the same reason for which perhaps Mr. Haynes thought him a blockhead, I think him an ingenious boy. The teacher of arithmetic could not discern the future poet. Mr. Haynes's opinion reminds us of the dancing-master, who, when Lord Oxford was appointed first

° Beattie's MINSTREL, B. i. ft. 59.

^p OBSERVATIONS, p. 560.

Minister to queen Anne, declared he wondered what her majesty could see in lord Oxford, for that when he had the honour of teaching his lordship to dance, he was the greatest dunce at a minuet that he ever remembered.

What was supposed to be dullness in Chatterton was genius. The symptoms of talents were misconstrued by his contemporaries. They were disgusted with his pride, which was a consciousness of preeminence of abilities. Before he was five years old, he was the little tyrant of his playfellows, and the leader of the sport. Mr. Capel, now a jeweller of Bristol, a brother apprentice in the same house with Chatterton, relates, that there was "generally a dreariness in his look, " and a wildness attended with a visible countenance "tempt for others". The silence, the solitude, of this visionary boy, his eccentric habits, his singularities of behaviour, were not attributed to the true cause. His fits of melancholy were mistaken for fullness. His sister says, that he was "sometimes so gloomed, that for many days together, he " would say very little, and that by constraint." An old female relation, who undoubtedly thought him mad, has reported,

¹ Bryant, ut supr. p. 525.

that " he talked very little, was very absent
 " in company, and used very often to walk
 " by the river-side, talking to himself, and
 " flourishing his arms about '." He despised
 discretion, a virtue allied to many meannesses,
 and in the place of worldly prudence, atten-
 tion to proposals of economy, and a regular
 profession, substituted his anticipations of
 immortality. He scorned subsistence, but
 what his own poetry could alone confer *.
 One of his young friends who used to visit
 him at school, informs us, that when the
 senior boys were attempting to rival their
 usher Philips, in a sort of poetical contest,
 Chatterton remained an idle spectator; and
 from his inattention on this occasion, infers
 his want both of " inclination and abilities

* Croft's LOVE AND MADNESS, p. 148.

° I am informed from Mr. Crofs, late an apothecary in
 Brook-street, Holbourn, where Chatterton lived and died for
 want of bread, that hardly a morning or evening passed but
 he would step into his shop to chat. Mr. Crofs says, that his
 conversation, a little infidelity excepted, was most captivating:
 and that by the most pressing and repeated importunities he
 could never be persuaded to accept of frequent invitations to
 dine or sup. One evening, however, human frailty so far
 prevailed over his dignity, as to tempt him to partake of the
 regale of a barrel of oysters, when Mr. Crofs observed him
 to eat *most voraciously*.

“ for literary pursuits ‘.’” But, silent and unsuspected, he was now soliciting the muse in secret. This apparent indifference was owing to the coyness or delicacy of genius, not always willing to discover itself; and avoiding the observation of others, not so much from fear as from contempt. At the hours allotted to play, we are told that he constantly retired to read. This was the YOUNG EDWIN, who forged Rowley’s poems.

It was owing to his pride, which has been construed into veracity, that he so inflexibly persisted to the last, that these poems were written by Rowley. To this secret of his bosom he had vowed eternal fidelity, and there is a degree of heroism in his obstinacy. Although in a state of indigence, and a candidate for reputation, no persuasion, no expectation of gain or of praise, no interest, could induce him to depart from his original declaration. When he perceived that the poems were treated as forgeries, and that he was traduced as a cheat, the superiority which he had always maintained was affected, and he became still more determined in asserting what he had once asserted. His vanity

* Milles’s ROWLEY, p. 454.

was piqued in an improper way. He thought it would be more to his disadvantage, to own than to suppress the truth : he rather wished to escape the character of falsehood, than to claim the merit of excellent poetry. He had formed golden dreams of the success of this imposture. But finding that his forgeries were suspected, and that his hopes of profit were at an end, he would not avail himself of that fame which an open confession would have put into his power, and which now only remained to supply the place of solid emolumentⁿ. Criticism, the companion and the assistant of truth, has endeavoured to replace

ⁿ I take this opportunity of rectifying a misinformation which appears in the HISTORY OF ENGLISH POETRY, ii. 142. I have said, that Mr. Walpole's decision on Rowley, was delivered to Chatterton after he came to town in 1770. This is not true. Chatterton, not yet removed from Bristol, and almost two years before, had received this opinion from Mr. Walpole, in a very kind and affectionate letter. Chatterton returned two peevish answers, and their correspondence ceased. Had Chatterton, when he came to town in 1770, done himself the honour to call on Mr. Walpole, I am confident that Mr. Walpole, although he saw his forgeries, and was justly disgusted at the incivility of his letters, would have patronised his genius in the most liberal manner, and probably prevented his miserable end. Mr. Walpole never saw Chatterton.

those

those laurels, which he tore from his brows with his own hand.

I have mentioned his resources from books, and that he borrowed from a Circulating Library. Who can tell what uncommon books, exclusive of those of mere entertainment, may be accidentally contained in such a collection? We are informed, that long before he left school, he was devoted to study; and that he borrowed from Mr. Long, Mr. Shiercliff, and particularly from Mr. Green, who had the largest collection of any bookseller in Bristol, and to whom he was indebted for Speght's Chaucer, such books as their shops produced^w. From others he procured, Skinner, Kersey, and the small Saxon dictionary. It is urged, that the expression *fructuous entendement*, is in a manuscript poem of Occleve, to which Chatterton could not possibly have access^x. But the expression appears in a fragment of Occleve's Lamentation on the Death of Chaucer, in a miscellany called the MUSES LIBRARY, printed in 1738, a book likely to be found in a Circulating Library, and to be borrowed by a reader of old poetry.

^w Milles's ROWLEY, p. 5.

^x Bryant, ubi supr. 415.

My Maſtre Chaucer ! Flowre of eloquence,
 Mirrour of *fructuous entendement* †.

In this controverſy, deep learning has been miſtaken for general reading. Let us recollect, that in the preſent age, literary topics, even of the moſt abſtruſe and recondite nature, are communicated and even familiariſed to all ranks and all ages, by Reviews, Magazines, Abridgements, Encyclopedes, and other works of a ſimilar kind, which form the *ſchool of the people*. But I will add an anecdote, never yet published, which ſhews that Chatterton might have ſeen ſome books of greater variety and curioſity. During his life-time, the Old Library at Briſtol was of univerſal acceſs ; and I am moſt credibly informed, that he was introduced to it by Mr. Cattcott, a clergyman of Briſtol, who wrote on the Deluge, the brother of Mr. George Catcott.

While he continued in the Attorney's office, he had ſo little of his maſter's buſineſs to do, that ſometimes he was not detained for two hours in a day from his favourite object. And while he remained in this ſituation, he frequently ſate up all night, and

† Lond. For T. Davies, p. 31. 8vo. I have printed the Whole from MSS. Rawlinſ. 647, and from other manuſcripts. See HIST. ENGL. POETR. ii. 43.

wrote

wrote by moon-light². It has not been observed, that his master's office might have supplied blank slips of refuse or neglected parchment. To a penury of parchment it was certainly owing, that he wrote his lines of poetry like prose; a practice, antient indeed, but seldom used, and totally discontinued for at least two hundred years before the age of Rowley, when parchment was become a cheap and a common commodity. Necessity dictated this mode of writing to Chatterton, which might be wrong, but had the probability of being right. But I have something still more suspicious to say of Chatterton's parchments.

And here I must own, I should have thought, that the dean of Exeter knew how to play a better game at whist than to shew his cards to his adversary. He has however been so very indulgent, as to exhibit a long and a well-attested narrative, which amounts to this plain fact: that Chatterton practiced experiments to give the ink and the parchments, which he produced, the colour and appearance of antiquity. Yet he softens the matter by saying, that "this account only proves that Chatterton was disposed to

² His SISTER'S LETTER, Milles, ubi supr. p. 11.

“ exercise his inventive genius :” and that these experiments were by no means likely to answer the end proposed, and to produce the intended effect ^a. But as this story is not told with all its circumstances, I shall here give it, from the same testimony, with some material improvements or corrections, in the following unanswerable letter, written by Mr. Croft to Mr. Steevens, and lately communicated.

“ To George Steevens, Esq. Hampstead Heath.

DEAR SIR,

IT gives me pleasure that LOVE AND MADNESS, which I put together in a few idle hours, as much for the sake of doing justice to poor Chatterton as of blunting the edge of Hackman’s shocking example, has so well answered the former purpose.

“ ——— Where’er (his bones at rest)

“ His spry to haunte delyghteth best,”

Chatterton must be now not a little gratified when he looks down upon the squabbles he has raised on Earth. Every syllable which I have made Hackman relate of him in LOVE AND MADNESS is, I firmly believe, religiously true. Walmisly was my

^a See Milles’s ROWLEY, p. 437.

Tenant for the House in Shoreditch where Chatterton lodged with him, at the time he gave me the information contained in my Book. Chatterton's Letters which I printed, and which are hardly less singular perhaps than Rowley's Poems, are confessedly original.

As I cannot spare time from my profession to enter any further into this dispute, and as you inform me that Mr. Warton is going to publish something, I write this Letter, according to your desire, in answer to your's of yesterday, respecting what long since I said to you of Mr. Ruddall; and it is perfectly at Mr. Warton's service. But I must desire he will print it exactly as I send it you. When I have spoken for myself, he may draw his own arguments from my communication.

The left hand column is an extract from Dean Milles's quarto edition of Rowley's, i. e. of Chatterton's Poems, p. 436, 7. The right hand column is my account of the same business. In some material circumstances he certainly errs. It were easy to shew, the Dean has condemned Chatterton and robbed him of Rowley's Poems upon slighter evidence of less material mistakes.

That the Dean should have received *all* his information of this business from Mr. Ruddall is certainly impossible, because some part of his

his account of it is certainly untrue. The passages in the Dean's account, on which I comment, are marked, that they may be printed in Italics.

"A *singular* circumstance relating to the singular, and I have History of this Ceremony ("of passing the old bridge") *has been communicated to the Publick within these two last years*; and candour requires that it should not pass unnoticed here, especially as the Character of the relator leaves no room for suspicion. The objectors to the authenticity of these Poems may possibly triumph in the discovery of a fact, which contains, in their opinion, a decisive proof that Chatterton was the author of this Paper, and (as they would infer) of all

all the Poetry which he produced under Rowley's name; but, *when the circumstances are attentively examined*, the reader will probably find, that even this fact tends rather to establish, than to invalidate, the authenticity of the Poems.

Mr. John Ruddall, a Native and Inhabitant of Bristol, and formerly Apprentice to Mr. Francis Gresley, an Apothecary in that City, was well acquainted with Chatterton, whilst he was Apprentice to Mr. Lambert. During that time, Chatterton frequently called upon him at his Master's house, and, *soon after he had printed this Account of the Bridge* in

It is not clear to me, that the advocates for Chatterton have occasion to be apprehensive, if the circumstances should be attentively examined even according to the Dean's own shewing. But mine is somewhat different.

My visit to Bristol of a few days, in order to collect information

in the Bristol Paper, told Mr. Ruddall, that he was the author of it; but, it occurring to him afterwards, that he might be called upon to produce the original, he brought to him one day a piece of Parchment, about the size of a half Sheet of Fool's - Cap paper; Mr. Ruddall does not think that any thing was written on it when produced by Chatterton, but he saw him write several Words, if not lines, in a Character which Mr. Ruddall did not understand, which he says was totally unlike English, and, as he apprehended, was meant by Chatterton to imitate or represent the original from which this Account was printed. He

tion concerning Chatterton, was on the 23d of July, 1778. At that time I gave something to the Mother and Sister for their voluntary communications to me. After I published LOVE AND MADNESS, I laid a larger plan for their benefit, which I hope still to see carried into execution; and I designed something more to the family of him whose genius I so much respected, though I well knew his family deemed me their enemy for endeavouring to prove him guilty of Forgery. Prevented from going to Bath, and consequently from giving what I had set apart for this purpose, with my own Hands, I gladly seized the

cannot the

cannot determine precisely how much Chatterton wrote in this manner, but says, that the time he spent in that Visit did not exceed three quarters of an hour; the Size of the Parchment, however, (even supposing it to have been filled with writing) will in some measure ascertain the quantity which it contained.

the liberty allowed me by a friend of Mr. Ruddall to beg this favour of him. On the 22nd of March, 1781, I wrote to Mr. Ruddall, to whom I was then a perfect stranger, making use of his Friend's name, and enclosing a Draught to him or his order for ten pounds, requesting he would give the Money to Chatterton's Mother and Sister. On the 30th of the same Month, Mr. Ruddall called upon me in Lincoln's Inn; appeared, as I imagined, to lean to the side of this question which I have ever thought to be the right; and told me, of his own accord, what certainly agrees no more with

with the Dean's account, than what I have already related agrees with the Dean's saying that Mr. Ruddall told this, in 1779, on the prospect of procuring a gratuity of ten Pounds for Chatterton's Mother, from a Gentleman who came to Bristol in order to collect information concerning the Son's History.

He says also, that *when Chatterton had written on the Parchment, he held it over the Candle, to give it the appearance of antiquity, which changed the Colour of the Ink, and made the Parchment appear black and a little contracted: he never saw him make any similar attempt, nor was the Parchment* *pro-*

If my Memory not only fails me now, but failed me the same day, and has failed me ever since, Mr. Ruddall will correct me. To him I appeal, and by him I must submit to be corrected. But, on the 30th of March, 1781, he told me, AS I THINK, that *he assisted Chatterton in disguising*

produced afterwards by guising SEVERAL pieces
 Chatterton to him, or of Parchment with the
 (as far as he knows) appearances of Age,
 to any other person. just before "the Ac-
 From a perfect know- "count of passing the
 ledge of Chatterton's "Bridge" appeared in
 abilities, he thinks him Farley's Journal; that,
 to have been incapable after they had made
 of writing the Battle several experiments,
 of Hastings, or any of Chatterton said, "this
 those Poems produced "will do, now I will
 by him under the name "black THE Parch-
 of Rowley, nor does he "ment;" that, whe-
 remember that Chat- ther he told him at the
 terton ever mention- time what THE Parch-
 ed Rowley's Poems ment was, he could not
 to him, either as ori- remember; that he be-
 ginal or the contrary; lieved he did not see
 but sometimes (though Chatterton black THE
 very rarely) intimated Parchment, but that
 that he was possessed Chatterton told him,
 of some valuable lite- after "the Account of
 rary productions. Mr. "passing the Bridge"
 Ruddall had promised had appeared in the
 Chatterton not to re- News-paper, that THE
 veal this Secret, and Parchment which he
 he scrupulously kept his had blacked and dis-
 word till the year guised, after their ex-
 1779; but, ON THE periments, was what
 he

PROSPECT OF PRO- *he had sent to the Prin-*
 CURING A GRATUI- *ter containing the Ac-*
 TY OF TEN POUNDS, COUNT."

FOR CHATTERTON'S
 MOTHER FROM A
 GENTLEMAN WHO
 CAME TO BRISTOL
 IN ORDER TO COL-
 LECT INFORMATION
 CONCERNING HER
 SON'S HISTORY, he
 thought so material a
 benefit to the Family
 would fully justify
 him for divulging a
 secret by which no
 person now living
 could be a sufferer."

As this appeared to me the most decisive
 evidence, I asked Mr. Ruddall's leave to make
 use of his name about it, which he granted
 me ; and I made a Memorandum of it, the
 same day, at the distance of a few hours. But
 it is still possible my Memory might deceive
 me. In matters more serious than the authen-
 ticity of Poems, which are certainly exqui-
 site, whoever wrote them, it is not my way,
 I hope, to be more positive than I ought.

Q

Mr.

Mr. Ruddall will excuse me if I say, that I cannot possibly allow him, or any one, to determine the authenticity of the Poems, by telling the Dean, or the world, that, "*from a perfect knowledge of Chatterton's abilities,*" HE thinks him to have been incapable of writing the Battle of Hastings, or any of those Poems produced by him under the name of Rowley."

It appears to me that I cannot possibly, all this time, have been noticing what does not relate to me, because Chatterton's Sister, when she thanks me in a Letter dated April the 20th, 1781, for what I sent her and her Mother, through Mr. Ruddall, says that "the only benefits they have reaped from *the labours of her dear Brother,*" are what they have received from me.

Convey this to Mr. Warton, if you choose it, with many thanks for the pleasure I have received from his History of English Poetry; and believe me to be,

Dear Sir,

Your obliged friend,

Lincolns-inn,
Feb. 5. 1782.

HERBERT CROFT, Jun."

I will not affront the common sense of my readers, by making many remarks on a tale which speaks for itself. A man is brought to the bar for counterfeiting antient writings. An advocate for the prisoner shifts the accusation, and contends, that he could not be guilty, because it was impossible that such methods as he practiced for making the counterfeit could succeed. The attempt must not be confounded with the success. The attempt is readily granted, and that alone is sufficient for conviction. But Chatterton really did succeed in his deception, and imposed on many of his friends by this artifice. And it is but a dangerous apology in favour of a forger, to say, that he was *disposed to exercise his inventive genius*. That Chatterton *plaid tricks* according to doctor Milles's account, with a piece of parchment, and wrote on it in an old hand, is an anecdote which had better been suppressed in a vindication of his veracity. But by Mr. Croft's Letter, from the attestation of the same very credible witness, it appears that Chatterton *disguised SEVERAL pieces of parchment with the appearance of age*. For what purpose?

CONCLUSION. I could mention many other circumstantial evidences relating to the process and management of this forgery. But I do not wish to rest my proof on evidences of this nature. It is not from the complexion of ink or of parchment, from the information of cotemporaries, the tales of relations, the recollection of apprentices, and the prejudices of friends, nor even from doomsday-book, pedigrees in the herald's office, armorial bearings, parliamentary rolls, inquisitions, indentures, episcopal registers, epitaphs, tomb-stones, and brass-plates, that this controversy is to be finally and effectually adjusted. Our arguments should be drawn from principles of taste, from analogical experiment, from a familiarity with antient poetry, and from the gradations of composition. Such a proof, excluding all imposition, liable to no deception, and proceeding upon abstracted truth, will be the surest demonstration. A man furnished with a just portion of critical discernment, and in the mean time totally unacquainted with the history of these poems, is sufficiently, perhaps most properly, qualified, to judge of their authenticity. To such a person, unprepared and unprejudiced as he is by any previous intelligence, and a stranger

stranger to facts, let the poems be shewn. I can easily conceive to which side of the question he will encline. Nor will he afterwards suffer his opinion to be influenced by reports. External arguments, such at least as have hitherto appeared, may be useful, but they are not necessary. They will hang out lights sometimes false, and frequently feeble. In the present case, external arguments have seldom served to any other purpose, than to embarrass our reasoning, to mislead the inquisitive, and to amuse the ignorant.

T H E E N D.

danger to fact, let the poems be shown.
I can easily conceive to which side of the
question he will incline. Nor will he after-
wards suffer his opinion to be influenced by
reports. External arguments, such as least as
have hitherto appeared, may be useful, but
they are not necessary. They will hang out
like some times false, and frequently feeble.
In the present case, external arguments have
 seldom served to any other purpose, than to
embarrass our reasoning, to withhold the
indicative, and to awake the ignorant.

T H E E N D .